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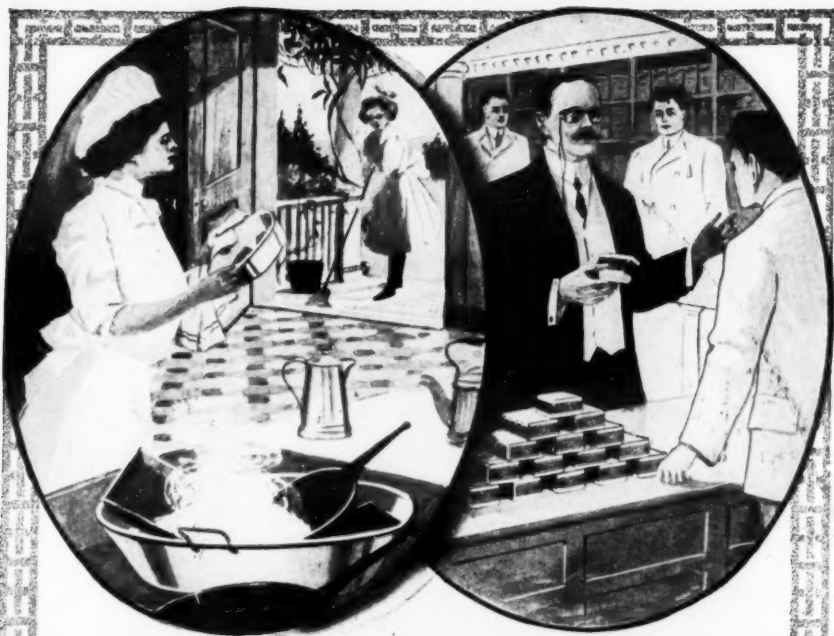
AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



Lovebirds

AUTHORS THIS ISSUE:— I.A.R. WYLIE, H.F. PREVOST BATTERSBY,
MARGARETTA TUTTLE, CARRINGTON PHELPS, ALICE GARLAND
STEELE, JULIE M. LIPPMANN, NAIBRO, BARTLEY AND OTHERS



SAPOLIO

Look into the Homes

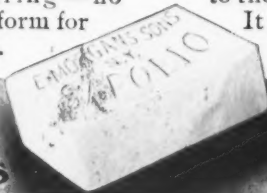
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An Editorial Announcement

Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, Joseph C. Lincoln, Margaretta Tuttle, I. A. R. Wylie, John Kendrick Bangs, and Thomas Addison all contribute fiction to a single number of one magazine—AINSLEE'S for December.

For the complete novel in this remarkable number we have been fortunate in obtaining "In Search of Arcady," by Nina Wilcox Putnam. Light, dainty, alluring, dramatic—it is all of these. It is set, for the most part, in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. The hero is a titled young Englishman, and the heroine—well, here is the heroine, just as the hero himself first found her:

Upon a tall, black rock that jutted out into the water sat a dryad She was tall, and of exquisite proportions, with lovely slender hands and narrow little feet. Her heavy black hair was wound about her small head in massive braids, and over her head were clusters of late dogwood blossoms. She held more white flowers in her hands, and around her throat was a long chain of scarlet berries. Her face was clear cut as a cameo, with wide-set eyes and full red lips. She was deeply absorbed in dissecting one of the flowers, and completely oblivious of her surroundings.

. Then a twig snapped beneath his feet, and with a startled gesture the dryad sprang up, glanced wildly about, without seeing him, and in another instant had disappeared, only a floating spray of white blossoms betraying that her presence had been real.

Several of the dozen or more short stories in this December number have a Christmas flavor. All of them, we believe, deserve to be in AINSLEE'S—"the magazine that entertains."

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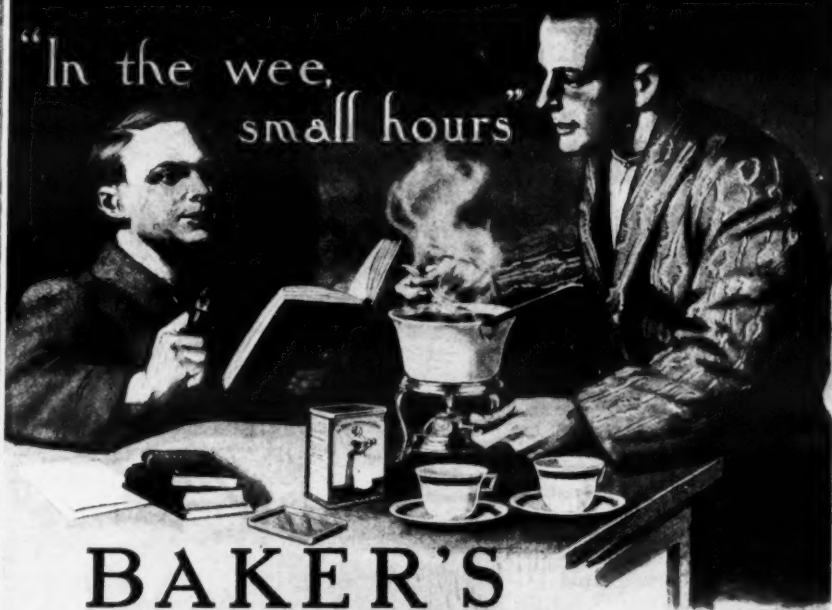
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VOL. XXVIII

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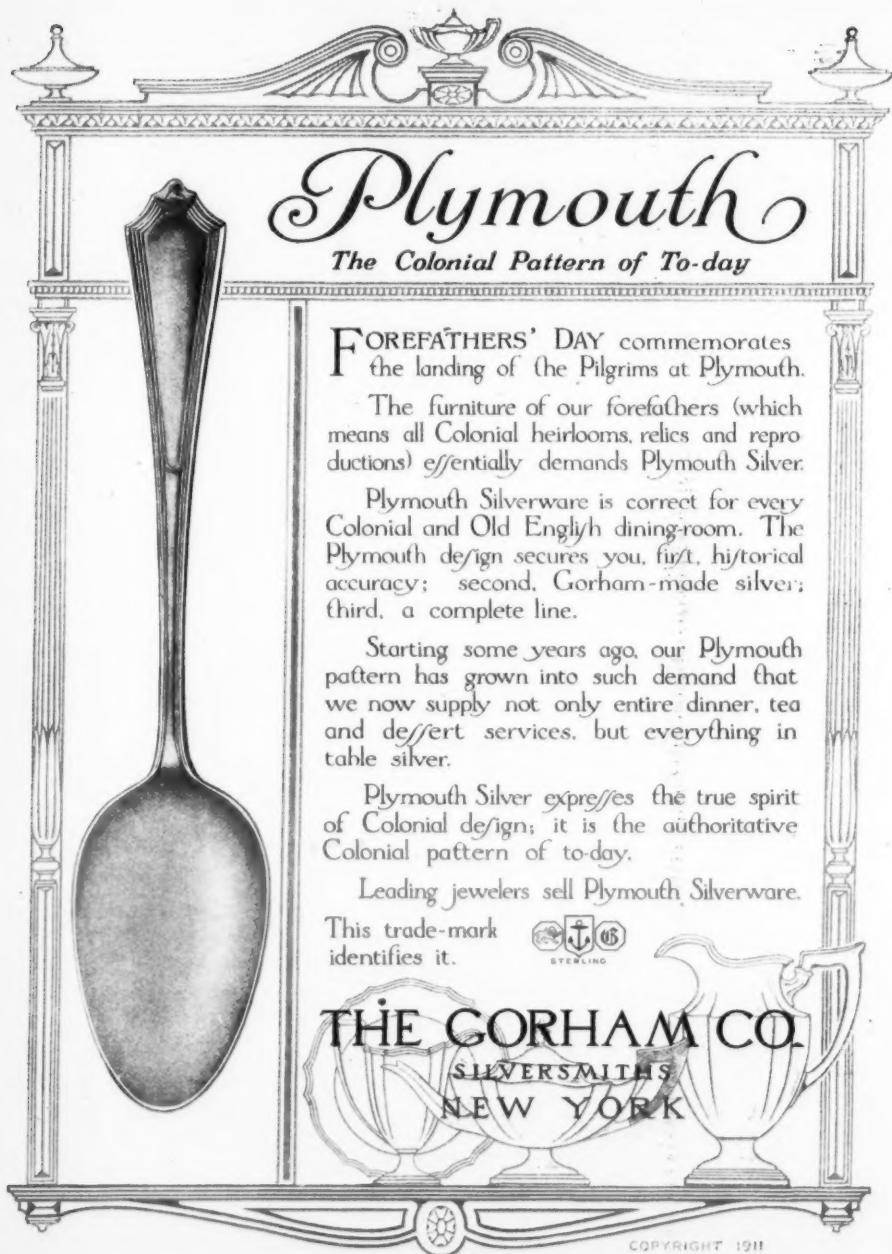
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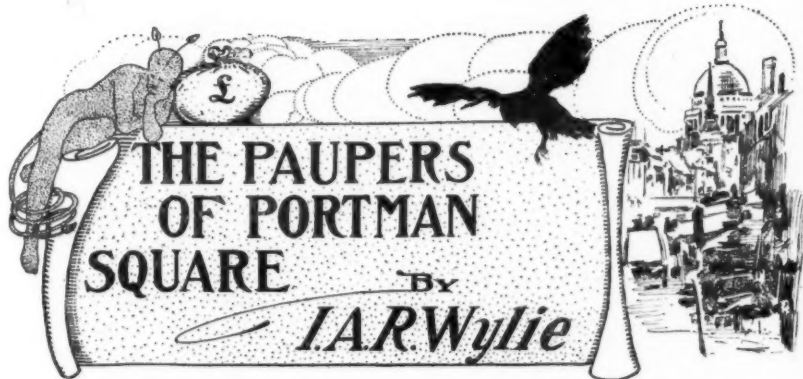
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXVIII.

NOVEMBER, 1911.

No. 4.



CHAPTER I.

THE folding doors of the dining room were thrown open, and a proud, clean-shaven individual in immaculate black ushered in another still more immaculate frock-coated individual. The frock-coated one seated himself at the breakfast table, and allowed himself to be waited on by his attendant, he meanwhile arranging his eyeglass, and considering his bulky correspondence with an expression of the most extreme languor.

"Charles!"

"Monsieur?" The proud one immediately became a statue of respectful attention.

"Charles, there is no letter from South Africa."

Charles' expression betokened surprise and profound regret.

"Charles, why isn't there a letter? I have been expecting one."

The fact that his master should have to expect something which refused to

come seemed to oppress Charles with a strong emotion of mingled sympathy and indignation. His shoulders dropped deprecatingly.

"Perhaps by ze next mail, monsieur," he suggested, as though trying to excuse a laggardly fate.

Mr. Heathcote St. John sighed, and sipped his tea.

"Charles!"

"Monsieur?"

"What do I intend doing to-day?"

"Ze Carlton at twelve, monsieur."

"H'm, yes. Where is your mistress?"

The necessity of answering this new problem was taken from the much-afflicted gentleman's gentleman. At that moment the side door opened, as though impelled by a gust of wind, and Mrs. St. John entered in person. At first glance there did not seem much of her, except that which was composed of silks and most dainty nothings, but when one had successfully mastered these details one became aware of a small, pretty, and most energetic face. Curiously enough, however, the energy,

like her stormy entrance, seemed to have no substantial effect on the bored atmosphere. On the contrary, it continued to thicken.

Mr. St. John rose politely, and bowed his wife a formal "Good morning," to which she responded by a gracious, if rather absent, smile. Then both busied themselves with their breakfast and correspondence until such time as the dignified Charles had taken his departure. Then St. John looked up, and considered his wife for a moment in troubled silence. She appeared engrossed in a document which had the appearance of a portentous bill, and only became aware of her husband's gaze after he had drawn her attention to it by a discreet cough.

"My dear," he began uneasily, "it hasn't come."

"It?" she interrogated, with the same expression of affable indifference.

"I mean—the letter from Uncle Jeremy—in other words, his remittance hasn't come. 'Pon my word, it is most awkward. I am almost worried."

His face more than confirmed the statement, and Mrs. St. John's affable smile disappeared as suddenly and a great deal more naturally than it had come.

"It must have been lost in the post," she declared.

"Most unlikely."

"Or he has forgotten. Tiresome man! How does he think we can manage?"

"I suppose he thinks that he allows us enough to cover over any chance delay, and, 'pon my word"—he pulled his short, fair mustache in supreme disconsolateness—"I suppose he does."

"Nonsense! It was he who wanted us to live in this place, and we have had to keep up our whole style in accordance. Heathcote, you must write to him, and explain. You ought to tell him to send us the money through the bank in the ordinary way. It is humiliating to be treated like children receiving their pocket money. You must tell him——"

"My dear Cecilia, I can't! You forget, I have never seen him since I was

a boy—we are complete strangers to each other. I haven't the right to lay down the law like that."

"Then you hadn't the right to marry me!"

It will be observed that by this time the atmosphere of boredom had begun to vibrate. St. John, unaccustomed to such things, looked blankly across the breakfast table.

"My dear, if you'll excuse my saying so, that sounds as though you had married me for my money——"

"Uncle Jeremy's money," she corrected.

"Well, then, Uncle Jeremy's money—it's all the same thing."

"It's not all the same thing. If it was your money there would not be this fuss; and, besides, then I shouldn't have married you for it."

"I don't understand," her husband complained fretfully.

"I did not expect you would. I merely implied that if it was your money it would probably mean that you had earned it, and if you earned it——"

She caught a glimpse of his aghast face, and sank back with a sigh of utter weariness. Possibly the request for immediate attention at the bottom of her bill had helped to exasperate her. "Heathcote, for pity's sake don't look at me in that idiotic way. I'm not asking you to break stones for our daily bread—I know quite well you couldn't even if I did. And, besides, there's no need. I dare say the money will come by the next mail, and we have credit enough. There, don't worry me any more. You make me too tired even to think, and I have so much to do. There is the dressmaker at twelve, Lady Dudley's luncheon party at two, and—oh!" Her voice ended in a smothered scream of horror. "Archibald, you very naughty little boy, what are you doing here?"

Her exclamation had successfully aroused St. John from his dreary contemplation of the teapot. He looked in the direction indicated by his wife's indignant finger, and beheld a spectacle rather ludicrous than terrible. A small figure in an extraordinary assortment

of garments stood in the doorway, and gazed upon them with large eyes of wonderment and distress. It was not that the garments in themselves were anything unusual—they were, in point of fact, everything that a young gentleman's should be—but their decidedly back-to-front arrangement and the outspoken disagreement between the buttons and their respective holes testified to the amateur hand. It was no wonder that Mrs. St. John screamed, and when she had taken in the full enormity of the situation she screamed again—in a lower key.

"Archibald, what *have* you been doing?"

"Crying," the intruder answered, with a faint pride.

"That was still naughtier of you. Where's nurse?"

"Dunno."

"You should know. Go and find her, and tell her to dress you properly. You have no business to be here."

She gathered up her letters as she spoke, and appeared to forget his existence. Archibald St. John did not obey. He looked at her, and from her to his father. The latter's good-looking but languid features took on an expression of shamefaced sympathy.

"What's the matter, little chap?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"I'm five," said Archibald loudly and distinctly, but with a faint quaver in his small voice.

"Glad to hear it. That's a grand age. Nearly a man, aren't you?"

Archibald listened to his elder's platitudes with a pained disgust. There was even a sparkle in his eyes, which would have warned both parents if they had known anything about five-year-old people—which they did not.

"It's my birthday," he said, and the quaver amounted to a break.

Husband and wife looked at each other, vaguely embarrassed.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. St. John. "Nonsense!"

"And nurse said that everybody who was good got presents on their birthday," Archibald went on, with the determination of despair, "and I was

borned—nurse said so—and I *am* good."

He made no offer to procure a witness to testify to this last statement—perhaps he looked upon it as incontrovertible—but two large tears rolled lugubriously down his flushed cheeks, thereby producing unexpected results. Mrs. St. John rose, and rang the bell vigorously; her husband took out a gold piece from his waistcoat pocket, and held it out with an awkward kindness.

"There, Archie," he said. "Run and buy yourself something, for Heaven's sake, and—"

"Don't be absurd, Heathcote!" his wife interrupted. "What can the child do with money? You are not tipping a waiter. Archibald, run away! You'll see to-night—what's his name?—Santa Claus—no, not Santa Claus—I mean, a fairy will bring you something lovely if you're good."

"Promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

She bent down to him to kiss him, but in her hurry she missed his cheek, and kissed air instead, and swept off, as she had come, like a whirlwind of rustling silks and sweet-smelling perfumes.

Father and son stood and looked at each other in silence. Of the two, St. John was vastly the more embarrassed. Even after he had patted his tie and polished his eyeglass he found nothing particular to say, and the tear-filled eyes fixed steadily on his face caused him a positive discomfort. In truth, this solemn, unhappy atom of humanity was a stranger to him. It came, like a fleeting gleam of sunshine, in and out of his life—a pleasing enough little object, but one which had no part in himself, which stood outside all his interests, his horses, his clubs, his many friends, lastly—his wealth.

It pleased him to have a son as it pleased him to have a pretty wife; they were agreeable appendages to show to the rest of the world, but he did not need them—nor they him. And he certainly had no idea what he was supposed to do with a crying child. Yet he felt vaguely guilty, and in his guilt he flew to the one resource which had

never yet failed him in his intercourse with his fellow creatures. He once more produced a sovereign, and pressed it into his son's sticky hand.

"There, little chap!" he said. "Ask nurse to buy you something nice with that—something you've been wanting."

"But the fairy will come, too?" Archibald asked doubtfully.

His father either did not hear or did not understand. In any case, he was too self-occupied to bother.

"Of course, of course," he said.

"Promise?"

"I promise."

At that moment Heathcote St. John remembered his club appointment. Awkwardly enough, but with an attempt at kindly playfulness, he swung his small son into the air, and placed him on the rug by the fire, thereby clearing his own passage to the door. Unfortunately, his playfulness was based on the supposition that five-year-old legs are of the steadiest, which they are not. Dazed by his sudden flight through the air, Archibald tottered, and tumbled with an unpleasant bump against the fender. Naturally he cried—for the second time that morning—and it was a miserable, sobbing bundle of miscellaneous garments which the housemaid found five minutes later, when it occurred to her to answer her mistress' summons.

"Well, I never! If it isn't Master Archibald!" she said, and proceeded to remedy matters by shaking him like a small sack of potatoes. "Well, I never! What would the mistress say? What put it into your head to come down here, you naughty boy?"

"It's my birthday," he said drearily.

"Your birthday?" She considered him a moment, and possibly the pathos of the empty-handed little figure standing in the midst of a reckless luxury dawned upon her, for her peevish, impatient expression softened. She picked him up more gently than was her wont.

"You're a grass orphan—that's what you are," she said, as she bore him off. "I always says it."

"What's a grass orphan?" he queried

anxiously, but the housemaid did not consider it necessary to reply.

CHAPTER II.

The nurse and the housemaid were seated by the nursery fire, talking over the ways of mankind in general, and the ways of footmen in particular. Consequently their sole reason for being in the nursery at all was completely forgotten, and had been allowed to wander off at his own free will. His own free will had taken him to the drawing-room.

It was still his birthday, but no fairy had come, so far as he knew, and the drawing-room presented his last desperate hope. It had occurred to him that visitors were always shown into the drawing-room, and that possibly the fairy had been waiting there all the afternoon. Moreover, it was a place of dainty, intangible things—essentially like his mother—and surely most likely to attract fastidious persons as, he was certain, fairies were bound to be.

On the whole, it was a dangerous adventure on which he was bound. In the first place, the drawing-room was forbidden territory for him, except on such unpleasant occasions when he was brought in to be admired; in the second place, he had a strong aversion to the dark, and evening had already set in. The first matter he managed to persuade his conscience to overlook; the second was to some extent mitigated by the companionship of a fierce-looking tin soldier, calculated to inspire fear into the stoutest goblin heart.

Thus he entered the drawing-room with a certain confidence, which changed suddenly to a mingled alarm and hope. A bright light burned at the far end.

If some older and consequently superior person had been present, he or she would instantly have discovered that the light came from a softly shaded electric lamp, and would have told Archibald so, adding, as is the way with superior persons, that he was an absurd little boy to imagine absurd things.

But no superior person was present,

and so Archibald made up his mind that the light was a fairy one, and that his fairy visitor was somewhere close at hand. He looked breathlessly from side to side, and, lo and behold! something freed itself from the shadows, and came slowly toward him—a something that was not a fairy, or else fairies were very different persons from what he had imagined. No, undoubtedly it was a goblin—one of his most dreaded enemies—and undoubtedly Archibald, in spite of the tin soldier, would have taken instant flight had not his legs, over which he had never the slightest control, made up their minds to stand there and shake.

Under these trying circumstances, there was nothing for it but to remain and observe the apparition closely. A superior person would have said "a retired greengrocer," but, in spite of an ordinary and strikingly human check suit, Archibald knew that it was a goblin—a goblin in disguise, perhaps, but a goblin for all that. The short, stumpy figure; the round, red face, with the small, deep-set eyes; the rather pointed ears; the wisps of disordered hair—all these characteristics were unmistakable. When it spoke, the matter was settled beyond dispute. It said "Humph!" and in a tone which sent Archibald's heart into the small space of his shoes.

"I—beg your pardon," he began feebly, but diplomatically, conscious that it is always best to be polite, even when on the point of being gobbled up—goblins, and the verb, to gobble, were closely connected in his mind. "I beg your pardon. Did you speak to me?"

"Not as yet," was the gruff answer, "but I intend doing so. Come here, young man."

The legs showing themselves complacent, Archibald walked forward—entirely against his own will—and the goblin laid a thick thumb under his chin.

"Humph!" he said again. "What's your name, anyhow?"

"My name is Archibald," was the more composed answer. "Archibald St. John."

"Not much of a name. Haven't you got anything better than that?"

Archibald recognized this as a "grown-up's" form of pleasantry, and the recognition gave him courage. Even goblins had their human weaknesses, it appeared.

"Susan calls me 'grass orphan,'" he announced proudly.

"Eh?"

Archibald repeated the statement, though with trepidation. The goblin's "Eh?" had been terrific.

"And pray why?" was the next question.

Archibald looked about him, as though he expected the answer to be lurking in a dark corner.

"I don't know," he said despondently. "Susan does, but she won't say."

The goblin was silent for a moment. Then he seated himself, and the firelight, playing on his face, revealed a decidedly grim expression.

"You seem pretty lonesome," he went on slowly. "Where are your folk?"

"Nurse is upstairs," Archibald answered, with an uneasy glance at the ceiling.

"H'm; never mind nurse. I meant—your pa and ma."

Archibald felt a small thrill of discomfort run down his spine. The "pa and ma" disagreed with him, but he supposed it was the correct thing among goblins.

"Father and mother are out," he said staidly.

"Together?"

"Oh, no!" very decidedly and very surprised.

"Oh, no!" echoed the goblin, with an ironical twist of the eyebrows. "Humph!"

The "Humph!" effectually put an end to the conversation for a moment. Archibald, whose capricious legs declared themselves weary of standing, seated himself cautiously on the footstool opposite his visitor. The latter studied him with knitted brows.

"I suppose you don't know that I have come a long way to see you, Mr. Grass Orphan?" he demanded abruptly.

"Me?" said Archibald, with a movement of pleasure. "Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Then—then perhaps you've come instead of the fairy."

"Of the what?"

"Of the fairy," Archibald repeated, with waning courage.

"I guess you'd better explain," the goblin said, and held his red hands to the blaze.

"You see, it's my birthday," Archibald began.

"I see. Lots of presents and tea fights, eh?"

Archibald shook his head. He had no idea what a tea fight was like, but it sounded dangerous.

"Oh, no. You see, the fairy who brings the presents didn't come in time. I think—I think"—his voice wavered somewhat—"father and mother must have forgotten to tell her—him—it."

"And you think I'm the fairy; is that the idea?"

Archibald's eyes opened to quite twice their natural size.

"Oh, no! You couldn't—I mean—I thought—I thought you were a goblin," he stammered, thoroughly alarmed at his own rudeness.

The visitor threw back his head, and laughed till his red face grew purple, and all Archibald's fears returned with double force.

"So I'm a goblin? Bless my soul—well, and suppose I am? Goblins can do as much as fairies, any day."

"Can they?" asked Archibald politely, thankful that the matter had passed off so pleasantly. "I'm so glad."

"And suppose I came all this way to ask you what you wanted—what would you ask for?"

Archibald's face grew grave. There was a vague wistfulness about his expression as he looked away from his questioner to the fire.

"Can you give me *anything*?" he asked.

The goblin's lips compressed themselves into a grim line.

"I can give you most things that human folk want," he said.

"Then, please, I should like my father and mother to be awfully, awfully fond of me—specially mother."

The goblin sat back in his chair. His jaw had dropped.

"Aren't they?" he demanded.

"Oh, no."

"Too—too fond of each other to bother about a little bit of a thing like you, eh?"

"Oh, no."

"They're not? Why not?"

Archibald gathered together all Susan's and his nurse's wisdom.

"They're too—too blasy," he explained.

"Too what? What the devil is 'blasy'?"

"Fed up," Archibald said, with some pride. "Fed up, you know."

The goblin made a sound that might have passed for a grunt or a groan. His small eyes wandered round the beautiful room, and hardened.

"So you want your folk to be fond of you?" he said. "Why especially your mother?"

"Because she kisses one so nicely," Archibald explained. "She smells so 'sensitive, you know."

"I have not the least doubt," the goblin admitted, with a grim sniff.

He waited a moment, studying the pale, tired, baby face before him. Then he got up, and laid one heavy hand on the frail shoulder.

"Perhaps I can give you what you want," he said. "There was a time—six years ago—when I gave your folk what they wanted, and it doesn't seem to have done them much good, but maybe you want something wiser than they did. At any rate, I'll try. Only"—his face relaxed somewhat—"I'm not a fairy, as you quite rightly decided. I'm only a goblin, after all. Fairies wave their wands and the job's done. Goblins have to go about their work slowly. And you'll have to help—yes, you," he repeated, as Archibald looked at him in wide-eyed surprise. "You'll have to give up things—presents, nice clothes, nice food, nurse, and everything. Can you?"

"Oh, yes!" said Archibald, thinking chiefly of the nurse. "Oh, yes, yes!"

The goblin smiled faintly.

"Well, we'll see. You must trust me,

d'ye hear? And you're not to say anything about me. You're not to say you know me next time we meet. It's a secret between us. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Archibald.

It was past his bedtime, and the world swam in a red glow before his hazy eyes. He had a dim recollection of a kindly pressure on the shoulder, of a thickset figure bending over him. Then all vanished, and he rolled off his stool onto the rug—asleep.

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Heathcote St. John leaned back in her comfortable brougham with a pleased sigh. It had been a long, but successful, day of what she called hard work. There had been the dressmaker, the luncheon party, the afternoon at the milliner's, and finally the opera and the delicious knowledge that everywhere she had been recognized as "the best-dressed woman in London." Altogether she felt, as she stepped from the carriage, and mounted the steps of the great, solemn-looking house in Portman Square, that she had touched the summit of her ambition. Not even the information that her husband was waiting for her in the drawing-room could altogether cloud her supreme good humor, and she entered the brightly lit room with the assurance of her own success.

Her husband was standing with his back toward her, and he did not immediately turn, but his indifference did not annoy her. In the whirl and brilliancy of her life his admiration and interest had lost their value.

"What is it you want, Heathcote?" she asked fretfully. "You know, it is really thoughtless of you to bother me at this time of the evening. I am so tired that I——"

She broke off in the middle of her sentence. Her husband had at last turned toward her, and his face had startled her out of her self-absorption. It was strangely pale; the expression of foppish boredom was gone, and there was something almost childish in the hopeless wretchedness in his eyes.

"I—asked to see you because I have something of the greatest gravity to tell you," he said hoarsely. "I'm sorry to trouble you, but it won't wait. I've had a letter from Uncle Jeremy's bank—there, you had better read it for yourself."

He held out an open sheet of business paper, and as she took it she saw that his hand trembled.

"I don't understand," she said, with the fretfulness of a vague fear. "I hate business. Why can't you tell me yourself? Only be quick. I'm too tired to stand about waiting——"

"It's very simple," he said, passing his hand unsteadily over his disordered hair. "Uncle Jeremy is ruined—and we have nothing more to expect from him. That's all."

She staggered; then took refuge in a blind refusal to understand.

"Nonsense!" she said. "Nonsense! You are dreaming."

"I wish to Heaven I were!"

His tone convinced her. She came slowly forward, the soft rustle of her dress sounding loud in the absolute, stricken quiet.

"You mean—we are ruined, Heathcote?"

"That's it."

"But the house—our things——"

"There are our debts to pay. All we have won't cover them."

"Penniless, then—what the world calls paupers?"

"Yes—paupers," he echoed dully.

She stretched out her hand, as though to cling to him for support, but he did not see the movement, and she caught hold of the mantelshelf. The marble seemed only to accentuate the whiteness of the small hand, and she looked at the glittering rings upon her third finger with a dazed unbelief. From them she looked at the room, at the costly brocaded furniture, at the valuable paintings, and then down at her own dress. Paupers! The word rang in her ears with a mockery that made her and her whole surroundings seem ludicrous. She looked finally at her husband, and a bitterness that was not far from contempt twisted her pale lips.

"What are you going to do?" she asked curtly.

He shook his head.

"Heaven knows. I shall manage somehow, I suppose. Of course—you will go home—to your mother."

A scarlet wave of color rushed to her cheeks.

"Of course," she said coldly. "What else did you expect me to do?"

"Nothing—nothing." He turned away without lifting his eyes to her face. "Cecilia, please excuse me to-night. I must think matters over. It's a—a good thing you have somewhere you can go."

She gave a short, hard laugh.

"Yes, it's a good thing," she said.

Then suddenly she bent down, and picked up some glittering object on the floor. It was the tin soldier, a little more bent and battered than before, but quite recognizable. Husband and wife looked at it in a silence which became oppressive. Mrs. St. John turned, and went slowly toward the door. The tin soldier was still in her hand.

"Good night," she said.

"Good night."

The door closed behind her, and Heathcote St. John was left alone to face the first catastrophe of his life. Curiously enough, he did not think of that—he thought of the tin soldier. And the tin soldier set fire to a new train of thought. Involuntarily he looked at the clock. It was well past eleven. At this hour five years ago he had been called to his wife's bedside, and had beheld the minute object which they told him was his son. His son! Like faint but growing vibrations from a great emotion, he felt again the almost agonizing relief after the hours of racked suspense, the immense tenderness, the dawning pride.

That night had seemed the crowning hour of his life—for the first time love had risen supreme above every other consideration, above wealth, and luxury, and pride of place. For the first time—and for the last! Then had come the magnificent gifts from magnificent friends, proud Uncle Jeremy's "extra check," and then once more waves had

closed over their heads, and they had forgotten.

To-night he remembered—now that the waves had rolled back, leaving him on a rock of naked ruin. His hundred and one luxuries had been swept away from him; all that remained were his wife and child, and they, too, were lost to him because he had never earned the right to keep them. It was curious how much he cared—before, he had cared nothing or very little. His wife, he knew, did not, and could not, care. She had married him for the wealth that was gone. His child did not, and could not, care. It had been a mere episode in his life, and he had treated it as such. He stood alone, a pauper, stripped of every possession that had made life beautiful.

Without knowing what he did, he switched off the light that revealed to him all the splendor he had lost, and crept softly from the room. He did not know why he went on tiptoe, or why he sought out a part in the great house which he had not once visited in four long years. He was only conscious of a dull pain and an inexplicable longing.

The nursery door stood ajar, and a faint light shone through the narrow space on to the dark passage. He wondered at it, and half drew back, but the pain was stronger than himself. The door answered quietly to his touch, and the next minute he stood on the threshold. He went no farther—the scene before him held him rooted and wordless. A shaded lamp burned on the table, and by its light he saw the small white bed by the wall—and his wife. She stood there, with her hand resting on the pillow, very upright, a vision of the world's luxury, with a face on which pride, and grief, and bitterness strove for the victory.

With an effort, Heathcote drew slowly nearer, and stood opposite her, with the child between them. He had never seen emotion on his wife's face before—or only once in the hour which they had both forgotten; and it was like a revelation—like the revelation of his own pain. In sheer awkwardness, he bent down and touched the boy's cheek

lightly with his finger. He felt that it was moist—as though a tear had fallen but the closed eyelids were dry.

"Cecilia!" he said unsteadily.

She threw back her head, with a movement of self-defiance.

"It was his birthday," she said, "and we forgot."

Their eyes met, and the same thought flashed through the minds of both. It was his birthday—the last birthday on which they could have poured wealth and happiness over him. And they had forgotten.

"Poor little chap!" Heatcote said, under his breath.

A rough, half-smothered sob broke the stillness. He looked up at her again in stricken surprise, and saw that her face was set in rigid, expressionless lines. But the sob had been unmistakable. Was it self-pity or remorse? He did not know, but, obeying an imperative impulse, he came round to her side.

"Cecilia!" he repeated hoarsely. He took her hand, and she did not withdraw it. Rather he felt that she clung to him. "Cecilia—it's hard on you—I'm awfully sorry," he stammered.

Then she broke down, and flung herself by the little bed in an overwhelming passion of grief.

"Poor little fellow!" she cried wildly. "I promised him—and I forgot—and now it is too late!"

He knew then that it had been no self-pity. And he bent and kissed her—for the first time in many months.

She did not know that he had kissed her.

Only the grass orphan smiled in his sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Smythe's At Home was in full swing; that is to say, her drawing-room was crowded to overflowing, and the conversation had been skillfully conducted into the channel of the latest scandal—two points which in Mrs. Smythe's mind indicated complete social success. She herself was the center of attention, and her story was listened to with breathless interest by a closely

packed circle of her intimate acquaintance.

"I assure you," she said, in a tone of profound mystery, "I could hardly believe my eyes and ears. You must try and understand exactly how it was. I was standing in Greene & Greene's front room—"

"What sort of shop is Greene & Greene's?" put in a severe voice. "I never heard of it."

Mrs. Smythe glanced in the direction of the speaker.

"It's not a shop, my dear Adelaide," she explained, with deference. "It's an auctioneer's, you know. I had gone in about a sale of old china or something, and was just looking through one of the catalogues when I heard some one talking. You understand—the door was open—I could not help myself—it was most awkward."

"Of course," said a sympathetic parson's wife, evidently intending to assure the speaker of the understanding and approbation of respectability. "Of course—most awkward."

"In fact, I could not help hearing," Mrs. Smythe went on regretfully. "You can imagine—the business had no sort of interest for me. It was all about the selling of a house and furniture in a great hurry—ready money or something of that sort being absolutely necessary. But when I heard Portman Square and the number, you know, I nearly fainted. And five minutes later, who do you think should come out of the inner office—now, who?"

"Who?" yelled the chorus, giving up the riddle, as was expected of them.

"Mr. St. John himself!"

The chorus looked at each other. With one exception their expressions signified an excited delight, covered over with a thin layer of shocked disbelief. The exception was the owner of the severe voice. She sat a little outside the circle, very upright, very handsome in spite of the gray threads which mingled with the black hair, very determined looking, with close-shut lips and keen, sparkling eyes.

"Idiots!" she said, under her breath,

but loud enough for her neighbor to hear if she wanted to.

The parson's wife, as became a member of the cloth, recovered her speech first.

"You mean," she began gaspingly, "you mean the St. Johns are—dear me, what's the horrid word?—bankrupt?"

"Worse than that—paupers," said Mrs. Smythe, whose ideas of bankruptcy included a house in town, a shooting place for the season, and two-pence in the pound. "I had it all from my maid. You know, it is *so* unpleasant. Her cousin—at least, she says he is her cousin—is footman at St. Johns', and of course she hears everything. And it seems that the St. Johns' uncle—you remember Jeremy Harris, don't you, Adelaide, dear?"

"Adelaide, dear," drew herself up almost imperceptibly.

"I remember him very well," she said, and her bright eyes flashed with an aggressiveness which should have warned Mrs. Smythe that she had been guilty of a faux pas, but Mrs. Smythe and faux pas were so inseparable that she noticed nothing unusual in her guest's expression.

"Well, it seems that he has lost all his money, and of course the St. Johns, being absolutely dependent on him, are ruined. They are trying to keep the matter quiet, but I know for certain that they are selling everything, and that Mrs. St. John is going home to her mother."

The parson's wife sighed.

"Pride comes before a fall," she said piously. "I always knew something would happen to poor Cecilia. Of her one can truly say, 'Mammon was her god,' and I always knew that Jeremy Harris would end badly. I told him so, I remember, a few days before he left for some heathenish place. A scatter-brained, godless——"

"Cat!"

Undoubtedly the word had fallen, crisp and decided, but whence it came, and whether it referred to the iniquitous Jeremy or his critic none knew, and no one ventured to inquire. At any rate, it successfully put a stop to the

conversation. Mrs. Dechesney—otherwise "dear Adelaide"—had risen, and stood looking straight in front of her, with an alarming blankness.

"I'm going," she said. "Good-by."

The chorus rose in a flutter of amiability and uneasiness. Mrs. Smythe was foremost in the effusiveness of her farewell, for "dear Adelaide" was rich, and "dear Adelaide" also lived in Portman Square, and it is well to have as many friends as one can in that desirable neighborhood—if one cannot live there oneself. Mrs. Smythe herself lived "just off Portman Square," but that, as every one knows, unfortunately, is a very different thing. And, besides, one cannot put "just off Portman Square" on one's note paper. So Mrs. Smythe called "dear Adelaide" her best friend, and "dear Adelaide" lived in blissful ignorance of the fact, and called Mrs. Smythe "a silly little thing," or "a fool," according to the state of her own temper, and with absolute indifference as to who heard her.

"My dear, must you really go?" Mrs. Smythe said, holding her guest's hand between both her own. "I had so hoped you would be able to tell us something more about the St. Johns. You used to know Jeremy Harris, didn't you? And you live in the same neighborhood."

"But my maid has no cousins in the household," Mrs. Dechesney interrupted grimly. "That makes a difference. I am sorry that I have nothing to tell you. Good-by."

She went, and the chorus relapsed into a momentary silence, while Mrs. Smythe shook her head sadly and wisely.

"Poor, dear Adelaide!" she said. "Bitter, you know, bitter!"

The chorus signified their full understanding for the hidden depths of this terse comment by means of certain expressive contortions of the mouth and eyebrows, and the parson's wife folded her hands in the correct attitude of resignation.

"Of course, you know," Mrs. Smythe went on, almost in a whisper, "there was something between those two. What it was no one knew, but Jeremy

was of no family whatever—and you know what dear Adelaide is—so exclusive. They say, though, that it nearly broke her heart.”

The parson's wife lifted her eyes. “Ah, pride of birth!” she sighed. “I always said——”

But what the parson's wife said or did not say is of little importance, and in the meantime the object of this interesting conversation had crossed the rubicon, and, having gained the sanctified regions of social greatness, entered her own house. Without waiting to remove hat or coat, she went straight into her boudoir, switched on the light, rang the bell, and ordered the footman out of the room—all of which proceedings would have startled the latter personage very much if he had not been accustomed to the ways of his mistress, who was, as he acknowledged, “crusty and queer, but a real lady at the bottom.”

While waiting for a response to her heated summons, Adelaide Dechesney looked about her with a strange curiosity. It was almost as though she noted the beautiful details of the room for the first time, and there was an expression about her face, half bitter, half wistful, which at once accentuated the classic perfection of her features, and laid stress upon her age. For it was an attractive expression, but the expression of a woman who looks back rather than forward.

She was so absorbed in her own thoughts that the gray-haired servant who entered the room a few minutes later only succeeded in drawing her attention after a long series of discreet coughs. Adelaide Dechesney turned abruptly.

“Jane,” she said, “if I am not mistaken there is an unfurnished room at the top of the house. Is that so?”

“Yes, ma'am, and it's a real shame that——”

“A nice room, Jane?”

“As nice as any in the whole house, ma'am.”

“Suitable for a nursery?”

“For a—a——”

“A nursery, I said. Jane, don't gape. We're going to have a child.”

The old servant looked round helplessly, and her eye rested on the door with a decided nervousness.

“A—a child—we?” she gasped incoherently. “If you please, Miss Adelaide—I mean—ma'am——”

“Now, Jane, don't stammer, and don't say you don't understand; I never expected you to. Just try and grasp the fact that this time next week you will have a small boy of five to look after, and you'll feel clearer in your head.”

Either Jane could *not* grasp the fact, or the grasping process did not have the prescribed effect. At any rate, her expression of bewildered horror deepened.

“Please—a little boy,” she jerked out. “I don't know anything about little boys——”

“Nor do I, Jane; but we're going to learn. I shall see about everything tomorrow—everything must be in perfect order—for, you see, the little boy is to be my son.” She seemed to take a grim pleasure in her maid's increasing discomfort, but she cut short all interrogation with a wave of the hand. “Jane, you're going to ask silly questions. Don't! I've said all I want to say—you can go.”

The old servant turned tail and fled.

Adelaide Dechesney caught a glimpse of her own face in the glass.

“My son!” she said aloud, and smiled.

CHAPTER V.

“If you please, Mr. St. John, I should be glad to run over the things in the drawing-room. My catalogue says Sèvres and Dresden china ornaments. If it wouldn't be troubling you——”

The square-built, decidedly commonplace-looking man with the untidy notebook left his sentence unfinished, and tiptoed gingerly into the room which had been thrown open for him. Mr. St. John followed him passively, and then cursed under his breath. His wife was standing at the far end of the room, her head bowed; but as the two men entered she drew herself upright, and faced them—a miserable little figure, with flushed face and eyes bright with tears and resentment.

"You might have knocked, Heathcote!" she began stormily. "You know——"

"My dear, this is Mr.—Mr. Samuels, from Greene & Greene's, you know," St. John broke in hastily. "You know—about the china."

She made no answer, but stood watching the intruder with contracted eyebrows and furious eyes. On his round of the luxurious room he sniffed, and while contemplating her favorite Dresden shepherdess he even blew his nose loudly—a piece of disrespect which caused Mrs. St. John to bite her lips in a paroxysm of impotent rage.

Her husband watched her with the helplessness of despair, realizing in an indefinite sort of way—he was not given to thinking things out—that a considerable gulf of feeling, if not of time, separated both of them from that night of catastrophe when he had found her crying by Baby Archibald's bedside.

The first enthusiasm of grief and self-reproach was over, the wings of a passing remorse hung limp in the gray, dank atmosphere of reality, and she at least was facing matters very much as a woman of her type would face them—with a petulant, childish revolt.

As for St. John, in spite of the fact that he himself was in "a devil of a mess," as he would have described his own state, he felt something that was like pity for the pretty, unhappy woman-child who stood frowning miserably at the wreck of her favorite toys. "It was a deuced shame!" he reflected, in his choice vernacular. "A deuced shame!" He got no farther than that piece of wisdom, partly because he hated tracking down the "whys" and "wherefores," and partly because Mr. Samuels, of Greene & Greene's had finished his inventory.

"And now the dining room, if you wouldn't mind," he said, with a fat sigh of content. "Sorry to have troubled you, ma'am. Good afternoon!"

Mrs. St. John made no response, but her husband making a movement as though to accompany the unwelcome guest, she caught his arm in a grip of nervous strength, and held him back.

He saw that her face was scarlet, and that her nostrils quivered with an almost hysterical emotion, and with an instinctive dread of publicity he closed the door.

"Cecilia," he began, faintly protesting.

"Don't! Heathcote—when are the things to be sold? I mean, when must they—we—go?"

"On the twentieth. Greene & Greene's said——"

"Heathcote—it isn't possible. Oh, Heathcote!" She shook his arm in a storm of uncontrolled revolt. "I can't bear it! I simply can't bear it! I can't face things—I can't go back to the old, stuffy life at home! It's too much to ask of me. Can't you do something? Can't you make money? Oh, Heathcote, do *anything*!"

He patted her very much as he would have patted Baby Archibald's head, with about the same degree of understanding, and the same desire to express sympathy.

"Cecilia, my dear girl, I would do anything—give up anything. Only—dash it all, there's nothing of mine to give up, and as for doing anything—never did anything in my life."

"No, that's true." She smiled faintly and sarcastically. "Heathcote," she went on, with a sudden movement that was almost defiant, "there are your stables—your race horses—you used to say they were worth a small fortune."

"They're gone," he answered, with averted face. "Put up for auction yesterday."

He coughed as though to cover up an uncomfortable hoarseness, and a new expression came into his wife's face. She drew back a little, and regarded him with a vague wonder and comprehension.

"Your horses!" she repeated dully. "Your favorites——"

"If you please, ma'am, Mrs. Decheney to see you."

The footman stood on the threshold, an image of offended and injured dignity. His manners were as gentlemanly as ever, but every line in his face expressed the consciousness that disgrace

hovered in the air, and that, having the misfortune to have been one of the family, it reflected itself on him.

Mrs. St. John made a movement of protest. It came too late. Adelaide Dechesney brushed the footman on one side, and closed the door firmly and decidedly in his face, once and for all proving to that august person that she was no lady, and never would be one.

"I knew you wouldn't see me," she observed, with businesslike calm, "so I came in before you said so. I hope you won't mind more than you can help."

Mrs. St. John did not answer—the expression of wonder was still in her wide-open eyes—and her husband came hastily to the rescue.

"You know—we are always pleased to see you," he said. "Sit down by the fire. We shall have tea in a moment." He rang the bell energetically. "Tea!" he ordered, as the footman's red and insulted face once more appeared in the doorway. "Tea at once!"

The footman vanished. Adelaide Dechesney seated herself in her decided way in the chair which St. John had drawn up for her. Her lips were tightly compressed, her eyes bright.

"Heathcote St. John," she began abruptly, "I know you very well, and I knew your uncle more years ago than it is agreeable to remember. I feel myself one of the family, therefore, and intend to act as such. In other words, I have come to make myself unpleasant. Is it true that Jeremy Harris is ruined, and you with him?"

Heathcote felt wildly for his tie pin. His eyes were fixed on his wife's angry, humiliated face.

"Eh," he began. "Eh——"

"If you please, sir"—it was the footman again—"cook says the tea has run out, and as she was told not to order in anything fresh——"

"Go to the devil!" said Heathcote St. John, in low, concentrated accents.

The footman went—whether or not to the destination assigned to him by his irate master is not known—and there was a blank, uncomfortable silence.

"I'm awfully sorry," Heathcote began

at last, with a kind of wretched frankness. "You see——"

"Yes, I see," Adelaide Dechesney interrupted crisply. "You don't need to answer my question. Of course, I might tell you how sorry I am, and all that sort of nonsense, but I haven't time, and it wouldn't help you much. Instead, I'm going to be impertinent, and ask more questions. What do you propose doing?"

"My wife is going home to her mother in Shropshire," St. John answered, thankful to be able to speak about one point at least with an appearance of businesslike clearness.

"And then I suppose when you have retired into the country to milk cows, or whatever one does there, while your husband runs odd errands for some office——"

"Don't!" Cecilia burst out. "We don't want you to sympathize, but you needn't—needn't——"

She broke off, battling against a threatening flood of tears, and Adelaide Dechesney smiled a smile of placid wisdom.

"My dear, I'm enjoying the luxury of being unpleasantly truthful, because I know I can pay for it. I am going to do something which, I suppose, never occurred to a friend before—I propose to help you."

Mrs. St. John's eyes opened wide, with an almost childish flash of hope, but her husband shook his head. He could not help himself, and, being a man, he could not see how a woman could perform something beyond his powers.

"I'm afraid——" he began courteously.

"Please don't interrupt. Would five thousand pounds a year be of any use to you for the time being?"

"My dear Mrs. Dechesney, it's tremendously good of you, but it's out of the question. I could not accept money—not even borrowed money——"

"My dear Mr. St. John, did I say anything about borrowed money? Seriously, do you think you have any security worth offering? Don't be foolish. I merely propose buying some—

thing from you at a price which I don't think will be outbidden."

Mrs. St. John looked wildly and instinctively at her rings; her husband, being wiser, at the valuable pictures on the wall.

"I'm afraid—" he began again, but his visitor interrupted him with a curt gesture.

"I want Baby Archibald," she said.

They looked at her in blank, stupid silence, and she repeated her words slowly and with clear enunciation.

"I want Baby Archibald," adding: "When you've grasped that fact we can get on."

"You mean"—it was Mrs. St. John who this time recovered her speech first—"you mean—we—we should give you *our* son?"

"At the rate of five thousand pounds a year I should say 'sell,'" observed Mrs. Dechesney. "Still, we won't quarrel over a word, and perhaps 'give' *does* sound nicer. At any rate, there's my offer. I want something young about me, and I'm fond of that baby—at least, as fond as I can be of anything—and I'm prepared to do well by him and by you. So long as I live he shall be amply provided for, and you will be in steady receipt of the income I have already mentioned. At my death Archibald will receive the bulk of my fortune, with the provision that he continues the usual payment to you. Of course, five thousand pounds may not keep you in quite your present style, but—"

"Don't!" said Mrs. St. John, for the second time, but in another tone. Her knees shook under her, and she stretched out her hand blindly for support. "Don't! One doesn't sell one's own son!"

A grim, rather sarcastic smile twisted Adelaide Dechesney's composed lips.

"No, as a rule, one doesn't," she admitted. "But you mustn't let the *convenances* get in your way—they are so easily arranged. Let us suppose, for instance, that you decided to travel in India for a few years. Baby Archibald could not possibly accompany you, and what would be more natural than that you should entrust him to an old friend

of the family like myself? And when you *do* come back—why, all sorts of things might have happened. Archibald might have set up an attachment for me, and forgotten all about you—a splendid excuse to give the busybodies. You see, it is perfectly simple."

Mrs. St. John sat down opposite the woman, whose clear, steady voice had put unthought-of possibilities before them with the precision of a lawyer. She was now deadly pale, and her eyes were fixed on the fire, as though she were afraid to lift them. Her husband took hold of the edge of the mantelpiece, seemingly in an attempt to steady himself.

"One's own flesh and blood—" he began hoarsely.

"Heathcote St. John, don't talk sentiment to me! People who live in Portman Square should be above all that sort of feelings. They are altogether plebeian. And if you must have feelings at all, try and be unselfish for once in your life, and think of Baby Archibald. You owe that child something. You brought him into the world without so much as a 'by your leave,' and what have you to offer him? Nothing. And what do I offer him? Everything. You will admit, being civilized people, that money and all money means *is* everything?"

She waited a moment, looking from one to the other, with a curious look that was not altogether unlike that of suspense, but neither husband nor wife answered.

"Come!" she went on impatiently.

"Say something. Isn't it true?"

Mrs. St. John started as though from a dream, and looked at her husband. Their eyes met for a fleeting moment of question and answer.

"Of course," Heathcote said firmly. "Of course."

Mrs. St. John took a sharp breath.

"Of course," she said; "and, besides, there is Archibald to consider." She spoke quickly, with a curious but scarcely noticeable catch in her voice. "After all, we have nothing to offer him, and he is spoiled; he will miss things so; one does miss things so."

Heathcote nodded.

"We must be fair to him; and he won't miss us much, poor little chap. Only we can't accept the rest of your suggestion."

"So it's pride now?" asked Adelaide Dechesney. "Really, it is just as though you were trying to run through the whole gamut of correct emotions, and it is so unnecessary—between old friends. You don't suppose I'm going to buy things and not pay for them? Don't be absurd! It's five thousand pounds a year and Baby Archibald's future, or nothing and no future for anybody. I hope you know by this time that I am accustomed to meaning what I say."

Mrs. St. John rose suddenly to her feet.

"And—and if we consented—could. I—we see him sometimes?"

"By all means—if you didn't interfere."

Again husband and wife looked at each other with the same intense, unspoken question. Adelaide Dechesney stared steadily into the fire, and only the sharpest observer would have noticed the bitter smile which passed like a shadow over her lips.

"Heathcote——" Mrs. St. John began faintly.

"I think—we have not the right to refuse," her husband went on, almost as though to prevent her speaking. "I believe—I know—that you'll be everything that's good to—our son—more than we've been to him, probably—and——"

Mrs. Dechesney rose, and stood stiff and erect, her eyes shining like two sharp points of light.

"Putting aside appropriate sentimentalities, I understand that you consent," she said. "Is that so?"

The shortest possible hesitation.

"Yes, that's so," Heathcote answered.

"I presume that you will start on your travels shortly. In that case, I should like to receive Archibald some days before you go. You could help smooth over the change."

Heathcote put his hand to his collar.

"On the eighteenth, then?"

"That will suit me very well." She held out her hand. "And now I suppose I need not express my sympathy. People with five thousand a year don't require sympathy, do they?"

He gave a short, uneasy laugh.

"No, of course not."

She refused the offer of his escort with a curt gesture.

"On the eighteenth I shall have everything ready; also the check for the first year," she said. "Good-by."

She went out, and the door closed behind her with an ominous, threatening bang. Husband and wife were left standing opposite each other.

"We're out of the mess, anyhow," Heathcote said.

"Yes; out of the mess," she echoed.

But this time they avoided each other's eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

Baby Archibald was playing "bears" in the passage, and as he was accustomed to playing that adventurous game without the disagreeable element of the bears themselves, he screamed when the drawing-room door opened suddenly, emitting a tall, dark something which might, with the help of a little imagination, have been taken for a grizzly. The gun having missed fire, Baby Archibald was about to make discretion the better part of valor, when a firm, not unkindly, hand caught him by the shoulder, and turned him round.

"Come, now, you know who I am," said Adelaide Dechesney. "You frightened little fellow, what are you doing?"

"Killing bears," Archibald explained, with recovered dignity. "The place is full of them, you know."

"Yes, I know," she said. "In that case, perhaps you'd be so kind as to see me downstairs; I'm naturally of a nervous disposition."

The proposition met wholly with Archibald's approval. It was getting dusk, and the imaginary wild beasts were becoming substantial realities in proportion to the deepening of the shadows, so that he was not at all unwilling to act as escort to a large, safe-looking

person. So he thrust his small, somewhat hot hand into hers, and proceeded down the passage.

It was a long passage, and a beautiful one in so far that the walls were covered with valuable pictures, which stared down at the passer-by with a pompous consciousness of their own worth. Possibly Adelaide Dechesney proved one too much for them, for she returned their gaze with a contemptuous criticism.

"Tell me, Archie," she said—she was one of the few who ever reduced his name from its full-length dignity—"would you mind if you had to leave all these pretty things?"

Archibald looked up, vaguely surprised at this repetition of a question which he had answered once before.

"Oh, no," he said. "I've got to, you know."

"You've got to? What do you mean?"

"It's a secret," said Archibald mysteriously. "A big secret."

"Whose secret, you extraordinary little boy?"

"Mine and——"

He stopped short, and clasped the cool hand in a spasm of alarm. They had turned the corner of the passage, and a single electric light burning over a valuable "Old Master" revealed the figure of a man who was gazing up, notebook in hand.

"Jer——"

"Gob——"

The two broken and wholly unintelligible exclamations escaped simultaneously, and the man turned with a start, his red, bulldog face half amused, half alarmed.

"I beg your pardon," he began, and shut his notebook. "I beg your pardon but——"

"Would you mind telling me what you are doing here?" Adelaide Dechesney interrupted, with dignity.

"With pleasure. I am taking a memorandum of the pictures. This one, for instance——"

"Thank you. I know considerably more about that picture than you do. I want to know what you are doing here."

The man in the ill-fitting brown suit shuffled.

"If you please, I'm Samuels, of Greene & Greene's, auctioneers," he explained meekly. "I'm valuing things." At the same time he glanced at Archibald, and one eye closed surreptitiously. "May I offer you my card?"

"No, thank you. And pray, Mr. Samuels"—she gave the name a sarcastic emphasis—"who else may you be?"

"A ruined man, trying to earn an honest penny," he said. "I—I hope, Adelaide, you won't give me away."

"My name is now Mrs. Dechesney," she corrected frigidly. "As to 'giving you away,' I really don't know what you mean. You don't mean to tell me no one knows?"

"No one," he said, and his voice sank with mysteriousness, while his eye rested on Archibald. "There's only one person who *really* knows who I am, and *he* is under an oath of secrecy."

Archibald's small face lit up for a moment, but he said nothing, and there was a strained silence. Mrs. Dechesney stared at Mr. Samuels, and Mr. Samuels stroked his shabby coat collar apologetically.

"I'm afraid I've changed," he said. "I'm not as handsome as I was."

"H'm! Were you ever handsome?"

"I flattered myself—but, of course, time does deal unkindly with a bankrupt bachelor. You, Mrs. Dechesney, have grown, if anything, more beautiful. I hope Mr. Dechesney is well?"

"Mr. Dechesney is dead," she said, with increasing severity.

"Oh!" He did not apologize, and his "Oh!" did not express any particular degree of regret. "And now I suppose you are acting as comforting angel in this house of desolation?" he went on.

"On the contrary, I'm buying from the wreckage."

"Oh, that comes into my sphere, doesn't it?" He slapped open his notebook. "Let me see——"

"Look it up under 'babies,'" she suggested.

"I beg your pardon."

"I said 'babies,'" she repeated. "As

a matter of fact, though, the auction is over, so you don't need to interfere."

"You mean"—all the color had gone out of his ruddy face—"you mean they've sold——"

"Yes, that's what I mean."

"Their own flesh and blood?"

"Oh, my dear Jer—Mr. Samuels, how can you be so commonplace! That's just what they said, and lots of other pretty, sentimental things besides. Of course, they don't do it for their own sakes, you understand. That sort of people never does. Their powers of self-sacrifice are quite-overwhelming."

"I don't believe it!"

"What don't you believe—the sale? Do you know what a nice, clean, well-brought-up baby costs nowadays? You don't? You're a pretty sort of auctioneer, aren't you? Price of one baby—five thousand pounds. Going, going, gone! Now, for goodness sake, Jer—Mr. Samuels, don't look so aghast. The price is an absolutely fair one."

"I don't believe it!" he repeated. "At least—I mean, I don't believe they'll do it."

"Don't you know that people will do anything for money?" she said, with a sudden seriousness.

He winced, and then drew himself up with a dignity which made him seem taller and sligher.

"I know; that was always your idea," he said. "You believe that you can buy everything and everybody, and that everybody wants to be bought. In the old days you thought that I was just one of those who hung about you because of your infer—ch—wealth. I wasn't. I've proved since that if I want money I can make it."

"And lose it," she interposed.

"Exactly. In any case, you were wrong then, and you are wrong to-day."

"Prove it!"

"Time will prove it. I'm willing to wager."

"What have you got to wager—your salary?"

"Better than that—a secret."

"That's a misuse of feminine curios-

ity. However, it will pass. What are my stakes to be?"

"Shall we say—the permission to call on you?"

"As Mr. Samuels?"

"I *have* another suit," he said, with humility. "Anyhow, you can pretend that I'm the furniture man, if you like. I don't want to shame you before your butler."

"Thank you. Sh!"

Somewhere along the passage a door had been opened, and footsteps were heard coming in their direction.

"Come, Archibald!" said Adelaide Dechesney.

She swept past Mr. Samuels, of Greene & Greene's, auctioneers, and left him standing there, gazing up blankly at the "Old Master."

CHAPTER VII.

Number — Portman Square was in that unlovely state of confusion which attends "removals," auctions, and other unpleasantnesses—that is to say, a furniture van decorated the curb outside the house, green-aproned individuals lounged superciliously on the stairs, occasionally transferring some article from one place to another by way of breaking the monotony; pictures, sideboards, chairs, and tables littered the passages, and a spirit of desolation stared out of the curtainless windows.

There was only one place in Number — Portman Square which Messrs. Greene & Greene and the furniture-van emissaries had spared—possibly out of respect; the servants' hall, under the command of the butler, retained its usual aspect of severe comfort, to which was added a touch of genteel idleness. Obviously work belonged to the past.

Only one person was ever busy, and that was Tilda, the scullery maid, an untidy, scrubby, small person, who was generally supposed to undertake any odd job beneath the dignity of the select—and these odd jobs were remarkable for their number.

On this particular afternoon, Tilda was engaged in mending the housemaid's apron, and, as this might be

called a peculiarly "odd" job, she had been allowed to sit with her superiors, and enjoy the luxury of their conversation. It happened that the footman had broken his usual reserved silence, and, as may be supposed, the cause was one of first-rate importance and interest. He was not a man to waste his breath.

"I simply can't believe it!" the cook said, with her hands in her apron. "A nice little boy like that, too!"

Tilda pricked up her ears. It is to be regretfully admitted that she did not very often listen to what was going on about her, being slow of wit—a "natural," as the housemaid told her on various occasions—but the mention of "the nice little boy" made her look up. She had large, round eyes, and a mouth with a tendency to gape—characteristics which were very marked at this particular moment.

"It's as true as the Gospel," said the footman emphatically. "I tell you, I heard it with my own ears. Five thousand a year—that's what they get, and Mrs. Dechesney she gets the boy. A nice bargain, I must say, and—"

He was interrupted by a low, but piercing, wail from the scullery maid. She had dropped the apron, heedless of Susan's indignation, and large tears of horror and grief stood in the pale eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Adams, don't you go and say for they've gone and give away Master Archibald!" she sobbed. "It'll break 'is little 'eart, it will, I knows it will!"

Then a peal at the front door sent Tilda sniffing and shuffling up the stairs. Fortunately, the visitor was not a person of any importance. As Mr. Samuels, of Greene & Greene, loomed up before her dulled vision, Tilda drew a sigh of relief. She had a liking for Mr. Samuels, who neither snubbed nor bullied her, and she accredited him with what she called "a good 'eart," so that a faint, watery smile struggled with the lugubrious tears which trickled down her cheeks.

"I've just come in to speak with Mr. St. John about the china," the auctioneer's man said, as he hung up his hat on the stand. "Now, then, my dear,

what's the matter with you? 'Pon my word, I believe the girl is crying her pretty eyes out!"

But even this subtle flattery failed, and Tilda, on whose disposition "a good 'eart" always had a softening effect, burst out into a long-suppressed snort of despair and grief.

The sound roused Baby Archibald from profound slumbers behind a packing case. He had been playing hide and seek with himself and the various boxes and odd pieces of furniture which littered the hall, and in the natural course of events had fallen asleep. He sat up now and rubbed his eyes. From his point of advantage he could see and not be seen, but for the first moment he was too drowsy to notice anything. Then the scullery maid and the auctioneer's man heard a strange sound—something which sounded not unlike "Goblin!"

"'Tain't nothing!" said Tilda, drying her eyes with the corner of her apron. "It's that there furniture things which is allus creaking to itself."

"Well, and even if it does, that doesn't explain what you're crying about."

Tilda sniffed.

"It's Master Archibald," she said gaspingly, "the sweetest little boy that was ever borned—"

"But that's nothing to cry about, either."

The sniff developed to a second snort.

"They're goin' to sell him!" Tilda burst out in a flood of unusual coherency. "It's a real, downright sell—five thousand pounds a year—for the sweetest little boy that was ever borned—to that stiff-necked Mrs. Dechesney, which looks as though she 'ad swallowed a poker for her breakfast every day these ten years. And me that fond of 'im, too. 'E's the only Christian in the 'ouse, 'e is."

Mr. Samuels leaned his portly frame against the wall.

"You mean," he began slowly and emphatically, as though recovering from an unbelievable shock, "you mean that they are going to give him to *that* woman?"

"That woman?" echoed Tilda. "Wot d'yer mean?"

Mr. Samuels scratched his head dubiously and mysteriously.

"I'm not saying anything," he said, "but Mr. St. John ought to know what he is doing. It isn't safe to give a young child like that into the hands of a woman who does not know anything about such little creatures. I've heard tales"—he twisted his mouth horribly—"that would make your blood turn cold. One woman I knew—very nice lady, by the way—adopted a little boy just like that, and she gave him rhubarb pills every morning for breakfast, and codliver oil for lunch, and licorice for supper, and at the end of a year that little boy *died!*"

Tilda had stopped crying. Her eyes were wide open with horror.

"Lor'!" she said.

Mr. Samuels nodded.

"Died!" he reiterated. "Died like a doornail. Somebody ought to tell Mr. St. John."

"Tain't no good. Mr. St. John never bothers about Master Archibald."

"Well, Mrs. St. John, then!"

"She!" Tilda's tone was one of condensed scorn and bitterness. "She don't think of nothing but 'er clothes and 'er jools. She don't care wot becomes of 'im. And, besides, it's as much as my place's worth—though that ain't saying much."

"Somebody ought to do something," Mr. Samuels answered firmly. "A nice little boy like that!"

"The nice little boy" heard no more. With a caution and dexterity learned in many a bloodcurdling bear hunt, he crawled out from behind the packing case, and up the stairs, which led to his mother's boudoir. The whole business was a wonderful feat of self-control, for the tears were rolling pell-mell down his cheeks, and when he cried he usually cried audibly. But when he reached the corridor, he forgot all caution, and took to his heels, and fled in a kind of piteous, childish panic.

It was the patter-patter of his small feet which startled Mrs. St. John from

her task of writing letters. She looked up with a slight frown on her pretty brows, and saw her small son standing in the doorway—his face tear-stained, his lips quivering. A sudden color rushed to her cheeks.

"Well, baby?" she said, with a strange, unusual tenderness.

The sound broke the momentary paralysis which his awe had imposed upon him. He flung himself into her arms in a passion of grief and fear.

"Oh, mother, mother, it isn't true—it isn't true what the goblin said?"

She held him close to her, moved by an emotion so new to her that she did not in the first moment recognize it for what it was.

"Baby, what goblin? I don't understand."

He looked at her with wide-open, remorse-filled eyes.

"I didn't say 'goblin,' did I? I didn't mean to—please, you didn't hear, did you?"

Entirely puzzled, but obeying the behests of a belated instinct, Mrs. St. John shook her head.

"No, if you don't want me to, I didn't. But what is the matter? Why were you crying?"

Instantly he remembered his personal sorrow, and the small face began to pucker miserably.

"Tilda—Tilda said that you were going to sell me," he sobbed, "and that you didn't care for anything but—but jools—and that you wouldn't care if I died of—codliver oil—and—lickous and—"

The last part of the heartbreaking recital was lost on Mrs. St. John; the first part had stung too sharply. She held Baby Archibald closer to her, closer to her than she had ever held him in her life, and the warmth of his small, shaking body seemed to penetrate to her heart, and melt something there which had been vaguely hurting—a kind of frozen weight.

"It isn't true, is it, mummy—it isn't true?" he pleaded, panic-struck by her silence.

She looked down at him, seeking time.

"Would you mind—if you went away from me—for a long time?" she said confusedly.

"I think"—he had grown suddenly quiet and grave, like a little old man—"I think—it would hurt here—terrible." And he rubbed himself meditatively in the region which has been gracefully described as the "lower chest."

Mrs. St. John did not laugh. She sat there gazing at him, with doubt and wonder in her eyes.

"Would you really care, baby?" she asked.

He made no answer, but cuddled up closer to her, with his head under her arm, and for a moment neither spoke. Then he wriggled himself free, and looked up at her again.

"It isn't true, mummy, is it?" he reiterated piteously.

She shook her head.

"Hush! You must be very quiet for a minute. I want to think. Stay there, baby."

She pushed the letters on one side, and, with her hand supporting her chin, stared blankly out of the window. The other hand held Baby Archibald's. He had curled up obediently at her feet, and presently the smothered sobs died away into short-drawn sighs of exhaustion.

Mrs. St. John listened. And as she listened, a gradual change came over her face. Wonder, doubt, and a dawning understanding gave way at last to a look of desperate resolution, and the next instant she had rung the electric bell on her table.

It happened that it was Tilda who answered the summons. She was passing the door at that particular moment, and, knowing that in these degenerate days the bell probably meant an "odd job," she put in her scarlet, unhappy face. Then, as she saw Mrs. St. John, and the queer-shaped little bundle at her feet, her mouth and eyes opened to their fullest extent.

"Lor'!" she said, under her breath.

Mrs. St. John looked up, and an expression of relief passed over her face.

"Go and get Master Archibald's trunk down from the attic," she ordered

briefly. "And put out all the things he will need for a journey. Do you understand?"

"Y-e-s, mum."

"And send Susan to me."

"Y-es."

"And if you are asked any questions by anybody, you are not to answer them. Do you understand?"

"Y-es—mum."

"That will do. You can go."

Tilda gasped and went. Mrs. St. John pushed the letters into the waste-paper basket, and began to write in feverish haste. Baby Archibald slumbered peacefully.

CHAPTER VIII.

On her way downstairs, Tilda encountered the footman. He held a letter in his hand, which he was considering on all sides with supercilious interest.

"From Mrs. Dechesney for the master," he said, "and there's a man waiting for an answer. Here, as you're going upstairs, you'd better take it along up."

Obviously Mr. Adams suffered from optical illness, otherwise he would have seen that Tilda's destination was the kitchen, but she was not in a state of mind to argue the point with him, and she turned and plodded back the way she had come.

She found her master in his sitting room, apparently reading the newspaper, but as he was holding it upside down it could scarcely have been of absorbing interest. He started up as she entered. Not even the monocle could disguise the fact that his attire was unusually negligent, and that he looked tired and harassed.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"A letter for you, sir. A man is waiting for the answer."

Standing first on one leg, and then on another, Tilda waited while Mr. St. John ran over the contents of the message. Her mouth opened and shut at regular intervals, but no sound came forth, and only when he crushed the paper together and threw it into the

fire did she give vent to her habitual gasp.

"Go down and tell your mistress that Mrs. Dechesney is coming for Master Archibald this evening," he said. "I—I should like to speak with her at once."

Tilda did not move. Her mouth was now open, and apparently fixed. Her eyes gaped a ludicrous mixture of fear and determination.

"Be quick!" Heathcote St. John exclaimed emphatically. "Why, what's the matter with the girl?" For Tilda's features were undergoing the most hideous contortions, and at last, as though overcoming some terrific obstacle, a flood of outrageous English burst from her shaking lips.

"Please, master, don't you go for to do it—don't yer—though it's much as my place's worth—don't you go for to do it—it'll break 'is little 'eart, it will, and she'll kill him on rhu—u—barb and cod—cod—"

"She's mad!" St. John burst in, with his hand on the bell. "Matilda, calm yourself, for mercy's sake, and tell me what's wrong with you."

"'Tain't me," said Tilda, mopping her eyes with the corner of her apron. "It's Master Archibald wot I'm worriting about. I know it'll break 'is 'eart—I know it."

And this time St. John grasped her meaning. He coughed, frowned, and readjusted his eyeglass.

"Matilda, you are a very silly girl, and a very interfering one," he said. "You should learn not to mix yourself in other people's affairs. I—eh—am compelled to travel, and during that time—eh—Mrs. Dechesney—will take care of Master Archibald. There is no need for this commotion, no need at all. It's all for his good."

In his uneasiness he had grown pompous, and his pomposity seemed to goad the daring Tilda to frenzy.

"All for 'is good, indeed! What do you think 'e cares for money and fine clothes if 'e ain't got 'is own father and mother—'im wot loves you so!" she snorted. "You'd sell 'im—yes, sell your flesh and blood for dirty money. You air't fit to 'ave a little hangel like that.

If I was you, I'd work my fingers to the bone 'fore I'd play 'im such a low, mean trick—I'd——"

"You can go!" said St. John, furiously calm.

"I'm a-goin', thank you!" retorted the enraged Tilda. "This 'ere is a free country, and I've said my say. I'm poor, but I'm honest, and I'm glad to shake the dust of this 'ere 'ouse off my feet, I am!"

She suited the action to the word, and St. John was left staring blankly at the door, red in the face, but not now with anger. He had been compelled to face things as they really were, not as he had chosen to see them, and the effect was instantaneous—the more so because his silenced conscience rose up to add its testimony against him. What, as the scullery maid had said, did money and luxury matter to a baby, who preferred a rag dog and imaginary bears to the grandest toys? It was all a poor excuse to save themselves, to keep themselves from trouble and poverty. They were cowards, hiding behind a child!

But his wife? She would never consent—never let go her hold on the rescuing hand which had been held out to her. She would never be able to bear the struggle—she was not made to fight—or to love.

And then he was conscious of a strange, mingled feeling of tenderness and bitterness. She was so fair and young, so lovable; but she had never learned to love, perhaps could never learn. And if he asked such a sacrifice of her, would she ever forgive him?

He shook his head as if answering his own question, and in the same moment the door opened again, and Mrs. Dechesney stood on the threshold. She was looking unusually elegant and determined; unusually stiff, too, and uncompromising. St. John straightened his shoulders.

"I've come," she said abruptly. "Where's Archibald?"

"I don't know," said St. John, equally abrupt. Unconsciously he was beginning to look upon her as a sort of witch in modern garb, and his manner was not cordial.

"I came for him a day earlier than I intended," Mrs. Dechesney said, seating herself. "I did not suppose you would mind; on the contrary, you will be glad to have him off your hands."

St. John winced.

"Eh—yes," he said, "that is——" He lifted his head, and faced her with a new expression on his face. "I am not in the least glad," he said slowly and distinctly, "the more I think of it, the less I like it. After all, he is our own son—*our* son, and we have not the right to sell him. I tell you, if it was not for my wife——"

"You would refuse to part with him," Mrs. Dechesney finished ironically. "How convenient it is to have a wife!"

St. John said nothing for a moment, and the two looked at each other in hot defiance. Then St. John adjusted his eyeglass.

"You can jeer at me as much as you like," he said. "My hands are tied by a promise to my wife; otherwise I would act differently. Archibald will be here in a minute."

He rang the bell, and Mrs. Dechesney laughed.

"Heathcote, you ought to have gone on the stage," she said good-humoredly. "As the 'heavy father' you would reduce the gallery to floods. Now, what part is Cecilia going to play, I wonder."

St. John winced again, but he was given no opportunity to retort, for the door opened, and the footman ushered in Mr. Samuels, of Greene & Greene. That gentleman was in a high state of fluster, and, if anything, he looked burlier and redder in the face than ever.

"Pray excuse this abrupt entry, Mr. St. John," he said apologetically, "but I was cataloguing some china in the drawing-room, when I had the honor of meeting Mrs. St. John. She was just going out, and asked me to give you this letter at once, and in person."

St. John snatched the envelope from the unusual messenger, who, meanwhile, gave Mrs. Dechesney the benefit of a profound bow. Mrs. Dechesney ignored the civility. Her keen eyes were fixed on St. John's face, and saw there the strangest change from amazement

to the wildest relief. The next instant he had thrust the letter in her hands.

"Read that," he said. "She's gone—with Baby Archibald, to her mother! She couldn't part with him, after all—not for all the wealth in Europe—not even for my sake; and she's bolted with him. There, listen!" He rushed to the window. "The four-wheeler has just driven off. By Jove, she's a woman, after all!"

"Then the five thousand pounds is off," said Mrs. Dechesney hotly.

"And I don't care a hang!" was the rude answer. "I don't care a hang! I'm infernally glad—I——"

"Heathcote, don't use worse language than you can help." Mrs. Dechesney rose with dignity. "And if your wife gets tired of milking cows, my offer still holds good. Good-by."

St. John was still staring rapturously out of the window, and did not even answer. Mr. Samuels, of Greene & Greene, opened the door wide.

"I've just got my frock coat out of pawn," he whispered, as Mrs. Dechesney sailed past him. "I'll be round to-morrow afternoon."

But Mrs. Dechesney deigned no answer.

CHAPTER IX.

Heathcote St. John had arrayed himself in his best morning suit, and had been unusually fastidious as to the set of his collar and the color of his tie—facts which might have pointed to a festive occasion had they not been belied by the mingled depression and resolution expressed on his countenance.

As a matter of fact, he was preparing himself to "face the music" as he would have put it, and obeying by instinct the natural law by which it is ordained that a man in a well-cut coat is more likely to brazen matters out with success than a similarly situated individual in a shabby garment, he had given his morning toilet a careful if unaided attention. Charles, his French valet, had gone.

As he leisurely descended to the dining room, his eye rested disconsolately on the bare walls and carpetless floors,

and when he entered the once luxurious room, he found nothing but a table and a few chairs—and no breakfast.

He went to the fireplace, and rang the bell with the diffident air of a man who does not expect to be answered, and Tilda, who eventually answered the fourth summons, was greeted with a patience wholly different from the reception she had promised herself.

In truth, her tardy arrival was due to the fact that she had stood for five minutes outside the door, shaking in every limb. Her daring performance a few days back had magnified itself in her easily heated imagination to a heinous offense, and it was only the memory of Susan's comforting assurance, "Well, he can't eat you, anyway," which at length brought her over the threshold.

"Yes, sir?" she said timidly.

Heathcote turned from his moody contemplation of the empty fire grate, and adjusted his eyeglass.

"Oh, it's you," he said. "You seem to be running the house just now. The others are taking a rest cure, I presume? Well, never mind. Try and persuade cook to give me a cup of tea, will you?"

Tilda stood uncertainly on one leg, and then on the other. She was getting off lightly—apparently her sins were either forgotten or forgiven—but she was convinced that her next remark would call forth the dreaded storm.

"If you please, sir, cook isn't hup yet," she said, with a small gasp, and then waited with chattering teeth for what was to come.

Heathcote merely gave vent to a grim chuckle.

"Of course she isn't—how thoughtless of me! On no account disturb her. All the same, I am dying of thirst. What's to be done, eh?"

He looked at her with such an expression of woebegone appeal that Tilda's hopelessly inane gape gradually passed into a look of dawning intelligence. Her terror of her usually distant and unapproachable master was dying a natural death, and her mother wit consequently revived.

"If you please, sir, I could make hup

the fire and bile the kettle in a jiffy. I knows 'ow to make a cup o' tea with the best of 'em," she said.

Heathcote smiled.

"That's right. Fire away, then. You're a magnificent woman—a regular *Deus ex machina*, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Tilda obediently, and wondered if the new sobriquet had anything in common with the epithets usually showered upon her by her natural enemy, the cook. But apparently no harm was meant, and she busied herself with her preparations, appearing presently with a kitchen breakfast service and some rather greasy-looking toast.

During her absence St. John had seated himself at the table, and drawn out a crumpled letter from his breast pocket. He was reading it as she entered, and was so absorbed that he forgot to thank her, and his thirst for tea seemed to have entirely disappeared. For about the twentieth time he was reading the hastily scribbled letter which Mr. Samuels had brought him on the memorable day when his wife and Baby Archibald had taken to flight. It was a very disjointed, illogical little epistle, but it seemed to give the reader a peculiar satisfaction.

Mrs. St. John had written:

I am very sorry, Heathcote. I know I am sel'sh, but I can't help it. I meant to go through with it for my own sake as well as for yours. I wanted the nice things of life just as much as you did, but somehow I can't pay the price. It's absurd, but I can't do without Baby Archibald, and I don't believe he can do without me. I have just found it all out, and I haven't the courage to tell you. So I am going home, and I hope you will forgive me. I don't expect you to understand. I hardly understand myself, and you, being only a man, will only see that I have thrown away everything I used to care about. I don't know what is going to happen to us all, but I know that I can't give up my baby for all the wealth in the world.

"Only a man, indeed!" Heathcote St. John muttered indignantly, as he refolded the letter, but there was a curiously light-hearted twinkle in his eye as he looked up and perceived Tilda standing, with arms akimbo, her cap over one ear, watching him.

"Why, hullo!" he exclaimed cheerily. "What's the matter now, my kindly administering sprite?"

The administering sprite wriggled nervously.

"If you please, your tea, sir!"

"Oh, yes, the tea; confound it! I had quite forgotten. H'm, excellent stuff. When I move to Park Lane you shall be head cook. I swear it by my ancestors, if I have any worth swearing by. Now, finish your good offices, and fetch up such of my retainers as by this time have left their slumbers. I have a word to say to them."

Tilda gave another of her characteristic gasps. The flow of words left her completely out of breath, but she had gathered enough to understand her mission, and went shuffling out of the room and downstairs. When she had gone, Heathcote crossed over to his writing desk, unlocked a drawer, and took out sundry little packages, which he laid out in order.

The various servants were soon paid off and dismissed. This done, St. John threw himself into a chair, leaned back, and closed his eyes.

"If you please, sir," said a small voice, very timidly, at his elbow.

He opened his eyes and started round. Tilda, twisting her envelope between her work-worn fingers, was gazing up at him with an expression of frightened resolution. Her ludicrous appearance was not modified by the fact that her round eyes were swimming in tears, but she was very much in earnest, and Heathcote was not in the mood to laugh at her.

"Well?" he said. "What's the matter? Isn't the amount right?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. If you please, sir, I don't want it."

"Eh?"

"I don't want it."

"Don't want what?"

"The money, sir."

Heathcote shook his head.

"Tilda, I should consult a doctor at once. A person who doesn't want money must be mentally deranged."

"Please, sir, wot's that?"

"Wrong in the head."

"Oh, yes, I knows. Cook tells me that twenty times a day, so I s'ppose it's true, but I knows wot I'm a-talkin' about now. If you ain't got nothink for yourself, sir, I don't want nothink, neither. That's flat."

"Oh, that's flat, is it?" A faint smile was dawning over Heathcote's face. "I see how it is, Tilda. You're a philanthropist, which is about the same thing as being wrong in the head—especially if you are poor. You're not a millionaire in disguise, are you, Tilda?"

"Me, sir? Lor', no! Father's a cab owner. There ain't no millions to be 'ad in that there line with them taxis, sir."

"H'm!" Heathcote seated himself, and waved her to the only other chair of which the room boasted. "Sit down, Tilda! Yes, I mean it—sit down. I'm feeling rather lonely, and it appears that you are the only friend that I have got left. All my other friends are out of town. Do you know what it means when one's friends are out of town in the season, Tilda?"

"No, sir."

"You're lucky. I've just found out. Now, sit down properly. Don't balance on the edge of your chair like that—it can't be comfortable."

"Tain't right, sir."

"Oh, yes, it is, Tilda. We're both in the same box now. Wasn't it you who told me the other day that you were poor but honest? Well, that's my state now, only I'm not sure about being honest. At any rate, in spite of all your very excellent advice, I was ready to let my son go for the sake of the money bags, while my wife did the only right thing there was to be done, and took him out of danger. Which proves that she's worth half a dozen of me, doesn't it?"

Tilda put her disorderly-looking head on one side.

"Don't know, sir. We women is different. Tain't likely a man should understand."

"Oh, look here—hang it all, Tilda, don't you start rubbing it in! I know I'm a mere man, but I suppose you will allow that it is possible for me to have

some feelings? But, being a very ignorant and helpless member of the male species, I cannot do better than seek your advice. Now, just try and imagine that I'm like any poor fellow you might chance to meet on the street, without a friend or a penny piece to bless himself with, and with a wife and child that can do very well without him. Have you got that far?"

"Do you mean a feller wot I knows?"

"Yes, a friend, if you like."

Tilda reflected a moment.

"First I'd take 'im 'ome," she said slowly, "and mother 'u'd give 'im a square meal and a shake-down in our spare room. Then we'd look out for a job for 'im."

"But suppose he wasn't good for anything—had never done a stroke of work in his life?"

"Can't you do nothink, sir?" Tilda demanded, with eyes wide with surprise.

St. John thought a moment.

"I can play polo first class, and am a fair hand at bridge. I can drive a coach as well as any man in England, and make a mess of my affairs generally. Not a very promising list of accomplishments for a man looking for a job, is it?"

"If you could drive a coach you could drive a cab, sir," Tilda said, with a flash of inspiration.

St. John looked at her, and then burst out laughing.

"Pon my word, so I could!" he said. "Perhaps we shall come to that yet. There! I heard the postman's knock. I'll run down and see if there are any letters. You stay there, Tilda, till I come back."

Tilda gazed after him, open-mouthed, as he ran lightly down the broad, carpetless staircase. There was something fresh and almost boyish about him, which was quite new to her—and, indeed, to Heathcote himself. Though despair and a curious, aching loneliness gnawed away at a newly discovered region of his being, he felt freer and younger. Positively his heart beat faster as he fumbled with the refractory letter box. Three letters fell out, and

one he seized upon with a hungry eagerness, and, tearing it open, began to read it then and there by the dim light which filtered through the hall window. The letter was from his wife. Like the note, it was jerky and abrupt—and several degrees colder:

DEAR HEATHCOTE: I do not know whether it will interest you very much, but I thought I ought to let you know that baby and I have arrived home safely. As I have not heard from you I suppose that you are very angry. I am not going to make excuses for myself again. I do not in the least regret what I have done, and I am very happy to be here. But I am sorry for you. I suppose it was mean of me to leave you to face things out alone. I think everything has been a mistake from the beginning. We began at the wrong end of things. Neither of us had ever faced anything serious in our lives, and now we can't help either ourselves or each other. Only I have the baby, and I shall never give him up. I hope there is no law to make me, because I shan't. Father and mother say you can stay here until you have made some plans for yourself. Perhaps you could get some position where there is not much work to do—it must be dreadful for you. Please let me know what you arrange.

Your wife,
CECILIA.

And then, at the very bottom of the letter, in large and most unsteady letters, he found a postscript:

I am very wel. I hop you are very wel.
I wish you were here. Do kum soon.
Vour luvving
ARCHIBALD.

There followed a large, watery-looking blotch, which for more experienced eyes would have had a pathetic significance. But Heathcote was too stung to see clearly. The cold little letter, with its undercurrent of mockery and disparagement, had cut him to the quick—perhaps because he knew that it was justified. She treated him as a helpless drone, and something she had once said to him reoccurred to him now, lighted this time by a ray of understanding:

"If it were *your* money there would not be all this trouble; and besides, *then* I should not have married you for it."

At the time he had regarded the remark as one of his wife's unsolvable paradoxes; now he understood. If he had worked like other men—had built

a home for her with his own hands—she might have loved and respected him. Certain he was that she would not have left him now in the hour of his bitterest need.

With compressed lips, he turned his attention to the other two letters. Both were from friends, wealthy business men whom he had welcomed constantly at his house. Both were extremely sorry, but they knew of nothing to suit him. If they heard of anything they would let him know at once. Had he thought of trying the colonies, et cetera?

He crushed the letters together in his hand, and threw them into a far corner of the empty hall.

With a firm step, he went back to the dining room, where Tilda, from sheer force of habit, was flicking the dust from one place to another. She turned eagerly as he entered.

"Tilda," he said cheerily, "I've got just twenty shillings in the world. Do you think that you would keep me for a week in that shake-down you were telling me about?"

"Oh, sir!"

"Don't gasp like that. And look here, I've been thinking it over, and that idea about driving a cab isn't bad, Tilda. In fact, it's a perfect inspiration. How do you think I'd look perched up on the box with my best topper on, and a sporting coat of the latest cut? Don't you think I'd take the shine out of one of those taxi villains?"

Tilda's eyes were now stretched to a degree that was positively alarming.

"If you please, sir—I didn't mean—you're a fine gent, sir——"

"Am I really? Are you quite sure, Tilda? Do you know, I'm not, and I'm rather anxious to find out. And please don't call me 'sir' any more. You're going to take me home, away from this abomination of desolation, and give me a square meal and a job. Do you hear? And we're going to be friends, and give the taxis fits, aren't we, Tilda? Shake!"

He held out his hand. Tilda wiped hers on her apron, and they "shook" solemnly.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Dechesney sat by her tea table, staring blankly over the teacups at her visitor, whose teacup was empty, and had been empty for some time.

Mrs. Dechesney made no offer to refill it, and Mrs. Smythe made not the slightest sign of taking her departure. She was much too absorbed in the outpouring of her information, and in her endeavor to obtain like in return to notice her hostess' frigidity of manner—even supposing that she was given to noticing such things, which she was not.

"Perhaps you ought to know. In fact, dear Adelaide, I feel it my duty to tell you. Some one actually told me that you were going to adopt the St. Johns' little boy, with five thousand pounds a year as a *douceur* for the St. Johns. Quite absurd, wasn't it?"

"Quite," said Mrs. Dechesney, with grimly compressed lips.

"That's what I said!" Mrs. Smythe agreed enthusiastically. "Only, of course, Mrs. St. John is *so* fond of life, isn't she? And one could have imagined that the idea might have tempted her. After all, such a good thing for the boy, too. But, of course, it seemed ridiculous that you, of all people, should want a child about the house."

She waited hesitatingly for her hostess to say something.

"Do I look the sort of person to go round adopting other people's children?" Mrs. Dechesney demanded.

Mrs. Smythe blinked at the handsome, uncompromising features.

"Of course not," she said soothingly. "I hope you are not angry that I mentioned it, dear Adelaide. Only I felt that I should like to have your authority to contradict such a silly rumor."

"Please don't bother," "dear Adelaide" murmured.

"I feel it my duty. Though of course the whole idea is exploded, now that Mrs. St. John has returned to her mother, and her husband has disappeared. It's quite a dreadful business, isn't it? If only one knew what had become of Mr. St. John, one's mind would be easier, wouldn't it?"

"It might, and it might not," said Mrs. Dechesney enigmatically.

Her visitor's eyes opened to their widest extent.

"You don't mean—you don't think—anything dreadful? Oh, dear Adelaide, do tell me!"

"I haven't anything to tell you. I don't know what other people's minds are likely to do, do I?"

Mrs. Smythe rose, and shook out her silk skirts like an injured peacock. Inwardly she was telling herself that "dear Adelaide" was really getting very trying.

"And to think it is all the fault of that uncle!" she said, preparing herself for an orderly retreat. "You know, I always had my doubts about Jeremy Harris—a terrible *vaurien*. I remember at the time he proposed to me——"

"Oh, he proposed to you?"

Mrs. Smythe bridled and simpered, not without malice.

"Didn't you know? Oh, dear me, yes—long ago, of course. His attentions were most marked. I was quite sorry about it, although I gave him no encouragement. After all, I couldn't, could I? His father was a coal merchant or something, and then he is so very plain——"

The butler threw open the door.

"Mr. Samuels!" he announced, and the next minute a broad-shouldered, somewhat thickset figure made its appearance on the threshold.

Mrs. Smythe suppressed a gasp, and then drew herself frigidly upright. Mrs. Dechesney rose, and held out her hand.

"How do you do, Mr. Samuels," she said. "Mrs. Smythe, may I introduce you? An old friend—you remember each other, no doubt?"

Mrs. Smythe stared icily through the newcomer's bullet head.

"I think we have met before," she admitted, "only in those days Mr. Samuels was Mr.—— But perhaps I am being indiscreet. Good-by, dear Adelaide!"

She did not actually draw her skirts aside as she sailed past, but her manner suggested that there was a case of measles in the room, and that she was

trying to escape infection. When the door closed upon her the remaining two looked at each other, and a slow grimace wrinkled up Mr. Samuels' round features.

"She didn't seem to like me as much as she used to," he said. "What do you think was wrong? Was it my clothes, or my face—or both?"

"Both, I should think," Mrs. Dechesney said, eying him with strong disapproval. "Is that—that suit *new*?"

"New?" Mr. Samuels inspected himself thoughtfully. "Well, 'new' is rather a relative term, isn't it? They're new for me, you know. I bought them yesterday—secondhand."

Mrs. Dechesney sat down.

"How dreadful!" she said.

"Yes, isn't it?" He sighed. "But beggars can't be choosers, you know. I hope you don't mind. It was rather bad luck—my running into that old ferret. I'm afraid she'll compromise you forever."

"I dare say. But I hardly think it nice of you to call the object of one of your passionate attachments an 'old ferret.'"

"Passionate attachment? Really, Adelaide——"

"My name is not Adelaide—at least, not for you, Mr. Samuels. At any rate, 'the old ferret' has just been giving me a graphic description of one of your proposals to her."

"One of my—— Well, upon my word!" Mr. Samuels laughed gayly, and began to pour himself out a cup of tea. "I expect she was trying to make you jealous," he suggested.

"Jealous! Jeremy!"

"Mr. Samuels!" he corrected.

"You are as intolerable as ever," she said, sitting back in her chair. Nevertheless, a wintry smile had dawned across her features.

"You see, the old thing has an imagination," he went on placidly. "As far as I can remember, I never got as far as one proposal, but I paid her a lot of attention—for the same purpose."

"What purpose?"

"Of making you jealous."

Mrs. Dechesney moved impatiently.

"You were and are ridiculous," she said.

"Yes, I realize that now. A ruse like that wasn't likely to have the slightest effect on a woman so cased up in her own convictions as you were. You knew I was the son of a small merchant, and you knew I was after your money, and so, of course, I hadn't a chance." He seated himself opposite, balancing his plate of bread and butter awkwardly on one knee. "It doesn't matter our talking about this sort of things now; they are all over and done with, and we can afford to talk them over calmly."

"Yes," she agreed, but without much enthusiasm.

"For instance," he went on, "I always wanted to know how you found me out. I mean, how you knew that it was the money that tempted me. It was uncommonly smart—for a woman."

Her mouth set again in its old hard lines.

"Everybody is after money," she said coldly. "I guessed it from the beginning, and afterward I knew for certain."

"But your husband——"

She got up suddenly, and went away from him to the window, where she stood with her back turned. Mr. Samuels looked after her, and then put his cup softly on the table. A change had come over his round, weather-beaten face. It softened, and with that sudden expression of tenderness the plainness of his features seemed to vanish.

"I'm sorry, Adelaide," he said quietly. "It's rather mean of me to take advantage of your permission to call on you, and then worry you with the whys and wherefores of things. After all, we must all judge by our own experiences, and you may be right. Perhaps I ought not to have come; but I couldn't resist, and, after all, I won my bet, didn't I?"

She turned again, and looked at him with knitted brows.

"You mean about the St. Johns?" she asked.

"Yes. It seems that five thousand pounds wasn't quite high enough, after all."

She gave a little contemptuous laugh. "I'll give six thousand pounds, if needs must," she said. "I want that child. It's an absurd fancy, but I want something which for a few years, at least, will cling to me without knowing why, without regard for the financial reasons for its affection. Of course, I know that afterward would come ingratitude and disappointment; but I am an old woman, and——"

"Old?" he interrupted.

For the first time she saw the change in his face, and to hide the rising tide of color she passed her hand over her forehead to the gray hair.

"Yes, old," she repeated. "It's no good, Jeremy, you can't flatter me. Besides, it isn't flattery. I don't want to be young again."

"Nor I," he said, under his breath.

There was a moment's silence. They were looking at each other, taking toll of each other's sorrows, and of the traces which years and grief had left behind them. Then Mr. Samuels rose, and came to her side.

"I hate you to be disappointed, Adelaide," he said, "but you'll never get Baby Archibald."

"You think not? You really believe that that little gust of maternal affection will stand poverty and petty trial? Look! Here is a letter from Mrs. St. John herself. I got it this morning. She says she is worrying about her husband, and reproaches herself, but feels that she has done the right thing, et cetera. In other words, she is waiting for another offer. As to Heathcote, I have not the least doubt that when he has smoked his last half-crown cigar, and had his first taste at trying to earn his own living, he will be round here with the same doubts and qualms of conscience."

Mr. Samuels took the proffered letter, and read it carefully. There was a little smile about the corner of his mouth, as he handed it back to her.

"Yes, she does not seem to be exactly happy," he agreed. "I suppose milking cows under the paternal eye is not the most exhilarating of occupations, though I know worse. But are you

quite sure you have read the letter aright?"

"What do you mean?"

"I don't like to say—I hardly know myself. But I'm quite willing to enter on another wager with you."

She laughed shortly.

"You are an incorrigible gambler," she said. "What is it now?"

"I wager my secret plus a correct foretelling of the immediate future as regards a certain important event against your frank admission that you are mistaken about humanity in general, and the St. Johns in particular. You believe that money is everything to them, and to everybody. It isn't. *They* thought so, too, but they are beginning to find out the truth, as you will one day—that money, after all, is nothing against——"

"Jeremy, don't talk platitudes to me!"

"I won't, Adelaide; I'll prove them to you."

"When?"

"I'll begin right away, if you'll tell me one thing."

"And what is that?"

"That you'd be a little glad to find out that you had been in the wrong, that you had been rather hard on the rest of us poor mortals."

"Why should I be glad?" she demanded, almost defiantly.

He looked her full in the eyes. And in that moment he seemed to grow taller. There were even a certain dignity and power in his bearing as he answered her:

"I can't tell you why—I only want to hear from you that you *would* be glad."

There was a moment's silence. She tried valiantly to retain her hard, unmoved expression, but for one instant a spasm of pain passed over her features, and she turned quickly away from him.

"Of course I should be glad," she said quietly. "My knowledge has poisoned my whole life. There have been times when I have cursed the power which gave me an insight into the hearts of those I loved."

He smiled, unperceived.

"Yes, I know that. Do you know

when I knew? It was this afternoon, when you called me an 'old friend' to that—that woman. Unconsciously you stood up for me, Adelaide. It was a little thing, but it proved to me that your heart was not dead yet. And now I am going to show you something; it is the first link in my chain." He took her by the hand, and led her to the window. "Look!" he said.

Her eyes followed his pointing finger.

"Well?" she demanded, with a touch of her old asperity. "What is there to see? A hansom cab. Whose is it?"

"Mine."

"Isn't that rather an extravagance for Greene & Greene's valuer?"

"It is—decidedly. I shall have to go without my supper in consequence, and hope you will be generous with the cake to make up for it. But I want you to notice the driver."

"What about him? He looks rather smarter than the usual run. Quite a good-looking young man. Why—good heavens—it's—it's——"

"Number thirty-five hundred and five—otherwise Mr. Heathcote St. John, late of Portman Square."

"But, Jeremy, in the name of all things, what is he doing?"

"Earning his living."

"Jeremy, it's not possible!"

"It's quite possible. I picked him up after he had driven a poor old body from Kensington to Waterloo for nothing. He's no business man, but he's in dead earnest."

"But what are we going to do? I can't leave him out there!"

"You must. He has to stay by his horse."

"Jeremy, it's positively terrible. What shall I do?"

Mr. Samuels smiled grimly.

"You'd better send him out a glass of whisky and soda," he said. "Mrs. Smythe has passed for the third time, and has just recognized him."

Mrs. Dechesney stood a moment in bewildered silence.

"And his wife?"

"Knows nothing. Is probably milking cows in Somerset, or wherever the place may be. You see, Adelaide——"

She drew herself up severely.

"You called me 'Adelaide' again," she said.

He looked at her, and his eyes twinkled.

"And you have been calling me 'Jeremy' the best part of the afternoon," he retorted. "And now, hadn't you better go and see about that whisky?"

CHAPTER XI.

"You see, my dear Cecilia," Mrs. Hunter said, "this comes of going against the advice of your parents. I am not one of those people who always say 'I told you so,' but you will admit that from the very beginning I warned you against Heathcote. Of course, he is a very nice young man, and all that sort of thing, but you know, my dear, a man who idles through life—"

"I don't think Heathcote did idle," her daughter put in, with a meekness that covered over a certain amount of resentment. "He belonged to quite a lot of clubs, and once he went to a political meeting, and made a speech—or listened to one, I've forgotten which."

"Political meetings, clubs, and fiddlesticks!" Mrs. Hunter ejaculated, with as much heat as her phlegmatic disposition allowed. "*That* is not work, my child. Now, if he had gone into an office, or had a business—yes, if he had even kept a crossing, I should have respected him."

"But you would not have let me marry him," Cecilia ventured.

Mrs. Hunter smoothed out her stiff silk dress.

"My dear, that is neither here nor there. There are a great many people whom I heartily respect, but whom I should not consider eligible as a husband. Now, to go back, I ask you, would Heathcote undertake a menial task for your sake? Of course not—you know he wouldn't."

"He hasn't had the chance yet," Cecilia objected feebly.

"The chance is there now," her mother retorted dramatically, "but he will not recognize it. I know exactly what he will do—just what all young

men of his class do. Either he will accept a sinecure post from some commiserating friend, or will borrow money, or go to the bad altogether." Mrs. Hunter's tone grew more cheerful as her hopes descended. "At any rate, the idea of maintaining his wife and child by honest labor will never occur to him," she completed, with grim satisfaction.

Mrs. St. John let her needlework fall from her hand. She was looking pale and listless—perhaps as a result of the needlework, which was of a vivid and uncompromising pattern. But there were also tears in her eyes, and as it is doubtful whether even the most artistic person can be wrought to such a state of emotion by the mere sight of pale-blue roses with purple leaves, as worked on a canvas slipper, Mrs. St. John's trouble was obviously of another kind.

"You're not just to Heathcote," she said unsteadily. "I'm sure he would do anything he could for us. It wasn't his fault that his horrid old uncle went bankrupt. And, besides, what is he to do?"

Her tone was at once aggressive and defensive. The most casual observer would have discovered that she was desperately defending a criminal of whose innocence she herself was not at all convinced.

Mrs. Hunter rose ponderously.

"My child, you are perfectly right to speak kindly of your husband," she said. "After all, he is your husband, for better or for worse. Alas, I fear it has been for the worse. If only you had listened to me! I always said that a man who polished his finger nails would never do any good in this world."

"Mother!"

"Well, my dear, has he done any good? Has he done anything for you?"

The door opened at that moment, and a prim-looking maid entered, bearing a silver platter.

"If you please, ma'am, the letters from—"

She got no farther. Mrs. St. John had crossed the room almost before the words were out of her mouth, and had snatched—no weaker word would describe the action—the two envelopes

from the tray, and borne them in triumph to the window. The first she dropped instantly.

"For you, mother!"

"Well, my dear, you might at least bring it here! Really, these London manners——"

She stopped short, for the very sufficient reason that there is no object in holding a lecture to deaf ears, however much one is inspired. With an expression of offended dignity on her round, florid face, she composed herself to wait, at the same time keeping a stern eye on her daughter, who by now had reached the second page of her letter. But Mrs. Hunter was not fond of waiting, and the faint flush on the younger woman's face aroused her suspicions to an extent which made her forget that she was at that moment acting the part of the injured parent.

"Well, my dear?" she said, stiffly interrogative.

Mrs. St. John turned over the third page. Apparently she had not heard.

"Well, Cecilia?"

This time there was considerable asperity in the high-pitched voice. Mrs. St. John smiled to herself. It was a peculiarly sweet smile, which, taken together with the heightened color, was altogether charming; but as neither had anything to do with her mother the latter refused to be charmed.

"Cecilia!"

Cecilia looked up at last. Her eyes were sparkling, and the old look of listlessness had entirely vanished.

"Just think," she exclaimed. "Heathcote has written to me, and he is very glad I wouldn't give up Archibald, and he's got a good position in some firm, and he's doing splendidly. There now!"

It must be regretfully admitted that her manner was neither very filial nor very respectful—in fact, it was offensively triumphant, and Mrs. Hunter stiffened with displeasure.

"I am delighted to hear it," she said. "Might I inquire what firm has acquired the inestimable boon of your husband's services?"

Cecilia hesitated, and held the letter closer to the light.

"I can't quite make the name out. It looks like Jenkins & Jenkins, but I'm not sure," she said.

"And pray, who is Jenkins & Jenkins? I have never heard of the firm before."

Her daughter smiled. Her smile was gently patronizing.

"Oh, but then you wouldn't, mother. You see, you don't live in London, and so——"

"Have you ever heard of it?"

Cecilia wavered, looked at her mother, and then plunged boldly:

"Of course I have. It's a very big firm."

"What of?"

"What of? Let me see—ch—solicitors, of course."

"That accounts for your knowing them so well," Mrs. Hunter observed sarcastically. "I can imagine that Heathcote would be very useful in his new capacity—as office boy."

Mrs. St. John drew herself up to her full height. It was not a very great height, and it was wonderful what an amount of dignity she got out of it.

"Please, mother, remember you are speaking of my husband," she said. "You know perfectly well that Heathcote would never accept a subordinate position."

And with this concluding shot, she made a triumphal exit, thereby cutting short her mother's retort, which would have been finally crushing.

If necessity is the mother of invention, adversity is without doubt the mother of that and a good many other things besides, including a naughty, undisciplined spirit, with tendencies to deceit.

Baby Archibald knew this, because he himself was a living testimony to the truth of the adage. He knew that he had the above-described spirit, because Mrs. Hunter told him so regularly, and Mrs. Hunter, as enjoying the respectable position of his grandmother, could not be mistaken.

So Baby Archibald developed a naughty, undisciplined spirit, with a

tendency to deceit, and went to the bad—chiefly among the strawberry beds.

On the particular afternoon on which Mrs. Hunter and her daughter had their discussion, the former's grandson did his best to prove the theory of hereditary wickedness by performing Homeric gastronomic feats among the ripest and finest specimens. Discovery was inevitable and imminent.

Baby Archibald, feeling rather weary and depressed, heard the gardener's growling voice denouncing his misdeeds, and Mrs. Hunter's shrill retort, and he prepared himself for flight. Besides the already described spirit, adversity had endowed him with a gift for strategy. As soon as he heard David's lumbering step along the gravel path, Archibald crawled on all fours into the tool shed, and hid himself behind a mowing machine. As a rule, this place of refuge had proved entirely effectual; on this occasion, David seemed possessed of a diabolical cunning.

"Come along out o' that, Master Archibald," he growled fiercely. "I saw ye—ye thievin' little varmint!"

The heavy footsteps drew nearer, and Archibald's teeth began to chatter. If he had reasoned things out he would have known that there was nothing worse before him than a shaking and a long lecture on the evilness of his ways, but at Archibald's time of life reasoning is wholly subservient to imagination.

"Come along out o' it!" David repeated. "I sees ye!"

His shadow darkened the doorway. Baby Archibald gave a final desperate wriggle—there was a bursting, cracking sound, and a clatter of overturned cans and rakes—and, with a bump, Baby Archibald found himself sitting in the middle of a quiet lane, decidedly shaken, but saved as by a miracle.

The miracle was of a simple character. The back of the shed, which looked out onto a road, had given way, and had precipitated the refugee into an unknown region of leafy trees, and tall, graceful ferns, and lovely wild flowers, which grew up in rich profusion under their shadow. Baby Archibald, who in all his sojourn at the manor had never

been allowed to wander farther than the garden, believed himself to have been transported—rather roughly, perhaps—into fairyland. Consequently, he felt not the slightest surprise when, on scrambling to his knees, he found himself face to face with a thickset, square-jawed being, who sat on the fallen trunk of a tree, and mopped itself with a large handkerchief.

"Why, hullo, goblin!" Baby Archibald exclaimed delightedly. "Oh, I am so glad!"

Of the two, the goblin was decidedly the more surprised, but he recovered himself at once, and raised his hat.

"Why, hullo, grass orphan! Where did you spring from?"

"I didn't spring—I tumbled. Thank you very much."

"What for?"

"For bringing me here. I was so frightened."

"Oh, I brought you here, did I? H'm! Yes, of course. Well, what were you frightened of, eh?"

"David—he nearly caught me."

"He did?" The goblin stretched out a large hand, and, picking up Baby Archibald with surprising ease by the belt, planted him on the trunk beside him. "Who's David, anyhow?" he asked.

Baby Archibald raised his gray eyes in grave disappointment.

"Don't you know?"

"Of course I know, young man. I only wanted to find out if you knew."

"David's the gardener," Archibald explained, not wholly satisfied. "He's horrid—he doesn't understand little boys, mother says."

"Stupid man! And he's horrid to you, eh?"

"He doesn't like me, you see, 'cause I take the strawberries."

"H'm! 'Take' is a nice word. I presume you like strawberries?"

"Yes, and they are so good for me." His tone was slightly defensive. "Mother told granny so. I s'ppose mother knows, don't you?"

"I suppose so. Have you any doubts?"

"Sometimes I feel funny—here." He

put his hand thoughtfully to the region of his belt, and the goblin chuckled diabolically.

"Don't wonder. Never mind. It's a good thing I came in time to let you out of that trapdoor, wasn't it? By the way, it's quite a time since our first meeting. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Nothing—'cept being un—unhappy."

"Nice occupation that, especially when varied with steal—pardon—I mean taking strawberries. Well, I haven't been having a very nice time, either. Do you know what I was doing just now?"

Baby Archibald shook his head.

"I was running away myself—from a fairy."

"You!" Baby Archibald was surprised and shocked. "What fairy?"

"I suppose I had better explain, grass orphan. You see, it was like this: Once upon a time I offended this particular fairy. She was a rather lovely person, but you know what fairies are; once you put their back up, they can never forgive you, and my fairy was the most unrelenting of the lot. You must understand that I was very fond of her, but she thought I was after her fairy castle, like all the other goblins, and wouldn't have anything to do with me. It wasn't her fault altogether. There were other fairies who made mischief, and told lies, and made things horrid. There are fairies like that, you know."

"Oh, yes!" Baby Archibald's eyes brightened. "I 'spect granny is one."

"Dear me! She doesn't tell lies, I hope?"

"About father—lots."

"And you believe them?"

"Co'rse not! Nor does mother—but she cries." He sighed heavily. "She often cries now," he added.

The goblin rubbed his hands together, and chuckled.

"That's first-rate! The charm's working."

"What charm?" Archibald demanded eagerly.

"Don't you remember? 'Pon my word, grass orphan, I believe you have forgotten!"

"'Bout father and mother and me? No, I haven't, but I 'spected you had. You were so slow."

The goblin chuckled till his cheeks grew even redder than they were.

"Slow but sure, young man. Now, come here, and I'll show you the fairy I was running away from."

With his big hand clasped round Baby Archibald's small and rather sticky one, he crept to the end of the lane, and crouched down behind a hedge, whence one could see the full length of the road, which led to the station. Presently a one-horse shay came rumbling toward them, and the goblin gave his companion a dig in the ribs.

"There she is!" he whispered.

Baby Archibald rubbed himself. It is not nice to have a dig in the ribs after you have been performing gastronomic feats among strawberry beds, but he was too excited to complain. After all, a real fairy is not to be met every day.

"Where?" he whispered.

"There—in the cart, you young fer! Don't you know a fairy when you see one?"

The shay rumbled past. Baby Archibald gave a sigh of disappointment. He had caught a glimpse of a parasol and a stern, aristocratic-looking face, and he felt that the goblin had been making fun of him.

"That wasn't a fairy!" he said.

"That was Mrs. 'Chesney. She isn't a fairy."

"That's all you know about it. You don't suppose that fairies go about in spangles nowadays, do you? Police wouldn't let 'em. That's why I had to give up my tail, and take to these things." He indicated his attire with a disgusted finger. "But you can take my word for it that Mrs. Dechesney is a fairy right enough. She has a golden wand with which she can do everything—at least she thinks she can—and she has come down here to spoil my charm. She doesn't really want to, but she believes she does, which comes to the same thing. When you grow up, young man, you will find that fairies are the most contrary things on earth. They

don't know what they want themselves, but there's a devil of a fuss if you don't know. Anyhow, I'm here to stop this one, and to prove to her that her golden wand isn't everything. And you've got to help me, grass orphan."

"Me?" Baby Archibald's eyes were wide with excitement.

"Yes, you. You've got to take this letter to your mother at once. I had meant to give it her myself, but I didn't know the fairy was on my track, and I'm frightened. Now, run, little chap, as fast as ever you can."

Baby Archibald clasped the square envelope, and then he felt himself being swept up into the air, and over the hedge into the familiar garden. The next instant he was scampering over the strawberry beds as fast as a pair of short, none too steady legs could carry him.

Fortunately, David was not there to witness this culminating crime against his protégés, and Baby Archibald reached the drawing-room unhindered. Fortunately, too, he did not stop to listen, for if he had he would undoubtedly have turned back. As it was, he pushed his way through the heavy curtains, and then waited, not knowing what to do, and feeling rather frightened.

Mrs. Dechesney sat by the window, with her gloved hands folded uncompromisingly over the handle of her parasol. In spite of her decided expression, Baby Archibald, in the light of his new knowledge, saw that she had undoubtedly fairylike characteristics. There was, for instance, a lacy daintiness about her dress which betrayed her. Only the golden wand was missing. Baby Archibald supposed she had it up her sleeve.

"You see, I am quite determined," she was saying. "I quite understand your feelings, but you must see for yourself that things cannot go on like this. I do not want to be brutal, but another thousand pounds should really prove to you how mistaken you are in not giving yourselves and the boy a chance. And, besides"—she looked round the old-fashioned, hopelessly in-

artistic room with a faint disparagement—"as I know you, Cecilia, you won't stand this sweet simplicity for more than a fortnight."

Mrs. Hunter, who reclined on the plush sofa, raised her eyebrows in displeasure.

"I do not see why Cecilia should not be perfectly happy in her old home," she said stiffly. "She has everything she can possibly want."

"And, anyhow, there is no need to talk any more about it," her daughter interrupted. "I have just heard from Heathcote, Adelaide, and he says that he has an excellent position, and no doubt as soon as he has got everything ready for us the baby and I will return to him."

"I don't believe a word of it!" Mrs. Hunter broke in. "Heathcote is simply humbugging you. What respectable firm would give him an excellent position, pray? He knows nothing, and is nothing but a——"

"Mother, I will not have my husband spoken of like that!" Mrs. St. John rose, and faced her mother with fiery indignation. "I have the greatest confidence in Heathcote. I shall go home to him at once. I cannot stand it any longer. A wife's place is at her husband's side."

Mrs. Dechesney gave an annoyed laugh.

"Really, Cecilia, what a dreadful platitude! And suppose your 'place,' as you call it, were in a back alley, would you still be of that opinion?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that at the present moment Heathcote is driving a hansom cab for the cab owners, Jenkins & Jenkins. It may be an excellent position. It has, at least, the advantage of being very original."

Mrs. St. John sat down as suddenly as she had got up. All the color had gone out of her cheeks.

"It's not true!" she said faintly.

"My dear, it's perfectly true. He drove me to the station the other day, and I had an argument with him about the fare. He didn't know I recognized him, but I did."

Mrs. Hunter threw up her hands. "How dreadful!" she exclaimed, with extreme satisfaction. "I thought as much. You see, Cecilia——"

"Don't!" Mrs. St. John clasped her hands together in an agony of humiliation and despair. "How could he have done such a thing? How could he?"

There was a moment's silence. Mrs. Dechesney's face was twisted into an expression which was a strange mingling of satisfaction, disappointment, amusement, and disgust.

"At any rate, you see there is nothing to expect from that quarter," she said at last. "I don't want to press you, Cecilia, but really, if you want to save the situation there is nothing for it but for you to accept my offer. Mrs. Smythe has already seen your husband, and the scandal——"

"I shall never forgive him!" Mrs. St. John interrupted wildly. "Never! And I shall never go back to him!" At that moment her eye chanced to fall on Baby Archibald, who in his perplexity was trying to balance on one leg, and failing disastrously. "Come here, Archibald!" she said. "What are you doing there? And what have you got in your hand?"

He came forward shyly, keeping a wide berth between his grandmother and himself, and a watchful eye on Mrs. Dechesney, whom he now knew to be capable of anything.

"It's a letter—for you, mother," he said.

"Who gave it you?"

"A gob—a person, mother."

"Don't be silly, Archibald! Give it me!"

He obeyed, and she tore the letter open impatiently. The next moment she was on her feet, her eyes wide open with alarm.

"It's from a friend of my husband's!" she said jerkily. "He says Heathcote has been very ill—a bad cold and the night air—he never did wrap up properly. Oh, what shall I do?"

Mrs. Dechesney looked indifferent. Mrs. Hunter made a sound which in vulgar circles would have been called a sniff.

"I have really no idea," she said. "A man who degrades himself and his whole family by taking a low position is——"

"It isn't a low position! I must go to him at once. There is a train in half an hour. Adelaide, you will take me in your carriage, won't you?"

"No, I won't!" Mrs. Dechesney was really very angry, and Baby Archibald fully expected the golden wand to appear and turn his mother into a cabbage, or something equally unattractive. But, instead, the hard face relaxed unwillingly. "I suppose I must," Mrs. Dechesney said. "You are perfectly mad, Cecilia, but I suppose it must be in the family."

"It is nothing of the sort!" Mrs. Hunter rose indignantly, and prepared to follow her daughter out of the room. "At least—not on my side!"

And with this Parthian shot at her absent husband she sailed off in all the majesty of righteous anger.

Baby Archibald lingered a moment. He looked up at Mrs. Dechesney, and Mrs. Dechesney looked down at him, and there was a moment's awkward silence.

"Well?" she said, at last. "What is it?"

"I was wondering about your golden wand," he said, with his head a little on one side. "Didn't you want to use it, or couldn't you?"

"What golden wand, you absurd little boy?"

"The gob—somebody told me you had a golden wand, which you thought could make everybody do what you wanted," he explained. "But he said it couldn't, and it can't, can it?"

Mrs. Dechesney turned away. Her expression was grim.

"Whoever your 'somebody' is, he must be an extremely foolish person," she said.

CHAPTER XII.

Heathcote St. John was trying to shave himself. If you have been accustomed to a French valet, who rejoices in the name of Charles, it is a serious business to undertake such a

task by yourself. Add on the discomforts of a back room in a back alley with a slanting roof, no light to speak of, and a broken mirror, and the task becomes almost impossible.

Heathcote cut himself twice before he at length succeeded, and then he sat down on the one chair, and waited for his temper to come back. That took about five minutes, and then he went on, patiently carrying about the remnant of his glass from one side of the attic to another, in the endeavor to make the most of what little light came through the tiny window.

Now and again he stopped to look at himself with a sort of objective interest. The change in him was of a remarkable though subtle kind. He was thinner—almost haggard; there was not an ounce of superfluous flesh anywhere about him, and his hands, which he examined with a rueful grimace, were red with work. But the greater change lay in his expression. The eyes were alert and keen-looking, the well-cut lips had learned to close themselves in a line of decision and energy, and he held himself erect. The old languid indifference, the air of almost stupid good nature, the stooping gait, had vanished. In a word, the dandy had become a man of action, though he had not left his dandyism wholly behind him. Indeed, he took the usual care of his tie, and was extraordinarily particular as to the spotless condition of his sporting coat.

The latter had a tin disk fastened in the buttonhole, which disk announced that the owner was No. 3505, and seemed to cause Heathcote a certain amount of grim amusement. He arranged it at all sorts of different positions, and then, when it was adjusted to his satisfaction, he took a top hat from a box under the truckle bed, brushed it carefully, and donned it at a somewhat rakish angle.

"I'd like to see the old lady who'd resist me now!" he said, with a boyish chuckle.

"If you please, sir, tea is ready."

Heathcote opened the low door, and shook his finger threateningly.

"Tilda, if you call me 'sir' again, something awful will happen to you. I'm coming in a moment."

He went back to the table, and, snatching up a letter, thrust it in his pocket, and ran down the rickety stairs after Tilda's disappearing figure. He reached the Jenkins' parlor almost at the same time as she did, and burst into the tiny room like a storm of March wind.

"Now, then, Mother Jenkins, give me a cup of something, quick! The horse is waiting, and I've got ten bob to make before midnight. H'm, you can cook, mother!"

"Lor', sir, that ain't nothin'. A cup o' tea's easy to make."

"Oh, is it? Then I wonder why my one-hundred-pound cook couldn't manage it. But look here, if either of you two call me 'sir' again I shall—pon my word, I don't know what I shall do. Imagination won't run to it. Now, mother, just you cast an eye over me, and calculate how many tips I shall get out of your sex to-night."

Mrs. Jenkins folded her arms over her ample bosom, and considered him carefully, a beam of pride spreading over her round, good-natured, if rather toil-worn, face.

"You'll do fine," she said, gulping down a forbidden "sir." "You're the smartest man I've ever seen on the ranks even in the good old days. I tell you, then there was one or two tidy chaps, but since then these taxis—"

"Yes, yes, I know, mother. But I'm going to knock sparks out of the taxis yet, just you see if I don't. Good-by, both, and pray for me that I don't run over a policeman."

Tilda followed him downstairs. She was, if possible, a shade more disorderly than in her Portman Square days, but her plain face radiated an entirely new expression of intelligence.

"Please, 'ave you 'eard, sir?" she asked timidly, as she stood at his side in the yard, and watched him as he drew on his driving gloves. "I 'ope you'll forgive me, sir, but I'm that anxious."

"No, I've not heard," Heathcote answered, too absorbed to notice the of-

fending title. "And you needn't mind asking me. Since you and your people have been so good to me you've a right to know my affairs—you especially. You're a first-rate pal, and a sort of guardian angel all wrapped up in one parcel, Tilda, and I'm awfully grateful. Here, do help do up this confounded glove, will you?"

Tilda obeyed, her clumsy fingers struggling desperately with a refractory button and buttonhole.

"And you've written to her, sir?"

"Yes. I wish to Heaven I hadn't! I suppose by this time she has found out that her husband is a shocking liar, and has given him the final go-by. If my respected mother-in-law has a word to say in the matter, it's sure. The Hunters never had a cabby in their family, and they won't want to begin now."

"But wot lies?" demanded Tilda, plunging at the root of the business, and tearing off a button.

"Tilda, you're no good as a valet, I'm afraid. My dear, it was what you ladies call a 'white lie.' I told her I had a splendid position—and so I have, from my point of view, and considering what a hopeless ass I am, but she won't think so. My reasons for so lying are complicated; you'd have to be rather hard hit yourself to understand them. Partly I didn't want her to worry about me, but the chief reason was—well, I didn't want her to know what an—infernal failure her husband is."

"You a failure!" Tilda shook with indignation. "You're just fust-rate, sir, and the woman 'o 'as you for 'er man can thank 'er lucky stars."

Heathcote gave a rather forced laugh.

"It's very kind of you to say so, Tilda, but unfortunately everybody isn't of that opinion. That's all right, Mr. Jenkins, I'm ready."

The last remark was addressed to a burly individual in shirt sleeves, who appeared, leading a horse out of the stables. By a certain vagueness in his expression, and an absence of any decided feature in his face, he was easily to be recognized as Tilda's father.

"'Ere you are, mister. I've given you my Bess to-night. She's my best 'oss, wot I don't let no one drive but meself, but I knows you're a gent wot hunderstands 'orseflesh, so I trusts you."

"That's good of you, Mr. Jenkins. I hope Bess will bring me luck."

With a briskness which would have surprised himself a few weeks before, Heathcote set about harnessing the horse to the waiting hansom, and five minutes later, amid admiring "ohs" and "ahs" from the watching hostlers, he drove out of the mews, and waved a last farewell before he turned into the street.

Five minutes afterward Heathcote was walking his horse slowly along Baker Street. In spite of his jaunty get-up, he was feeling depressed and miserable. Firstly, it was a dull, gray evening; secondly, he was beginning to realize that he was very much alone; thirdly, he had a confession in his pocket, stamped and addressed to one Mrs. Heathcote St. John; fourthly, he knew what she would do when she received it.

The fourth cause of his depression was the worst. Not that she would not be perfectly within her rights. He was without doubt a hopeless failure, and he would never attempt to hold her to him, but—but he wished to Heaven that things had been different, that he had made his own way from the beginning, that his uncle had never been born, finally that he had not fallen in love with his wife just when he was on the point of losing her.

The last thought made him wince. It had come almost as a revelation to him—this falling in love with a woman he had imagined he had loved for years. It was as though he had learned to know the depths of things for the first time, when it was too late.

By this time he had reached Waterloo Station.

And then suddenly a familiar voice fell on his ear, and he sat up in his box as though he had received the full contents of an electric battery.

"No, Cecilia, I won't take a taxi. I

don't like them. I'm old-fashioned, and I like to know exactly what is happening to me. With these newfangled machines, one can't possibly tell. Now, here's a nice-looking horse. Cabman!"

Heathcote looked down out of the corner of his eye, and kept his perch with a great effort. It was Mrs. Dechesney, his wife, and Baby Archibald.

"Yes, ma'am," he said faintly, and thanked Heaven for the dusk. "Where to, ma'am?"

"First to Portman Square."

"Yes, ma'am."

There was no need for him to try and disguise his voice—it was hoarse with horror—and for the next five minutes his thoughts were in a state which might be mildly described as chaotic. Indeed, it seemed to him that only a miracle could have brought them safely out of the crowded station, and had it not been for the knowledge that the cab contained all that was dear to him, he would probably have lost what little presence of mind that was left him, and driven into the first motor bus. As it was, he turned into the quieter streets, and hoped that at least Bess would have sense enough to keep them from disaster.

Then he tried to think clearly. The whole thing was too impossible—too awful. He lifted the trapdoor cautiously, and peeped down. He caught a glimpse of his wife's hat, the tip of her nose, and a stray curl belonging to Baby Archibald, who was apparently fast asleep, and the sight gave him such a peculiar thrill of pleasure that he looked again, and was caught in the act.

"What's the matter, cabman?" Mrs. Dechesney asked sharply.

"Nothing, ma'am. I was only looking to see if—if you were still there," was the feeble answer, and the trapdoor went down with a bang.

"The man's mad," said Mrs. Dechesney.

The "man" thought so himself. Or, if he was not mad, he stood before a most horrible, or, what was worse, a most ludicrous situation. It was clear to him that his wife had received his letter, and, encouraged by the "splendid

situation," had come back to London to take up her old place in the world. He had deceived her, and she was going to find him out, in an hour, or perhaps sooner, as a failure who had burlesqued as success, a useless creature who had sunk to the bottom of the social scale. It was true—he had meant to confess to her, but it is one thing to make a dignified confession, and another to be found out in *flagrante delicto*. Undoubtedly she would despise him—or laugh at him.

The thought was intolerable. By the time he reached Portman Square, he was ready to forsake his post, and make a dash for safety. But escape was impossible. Mrs. Dechesney descended the step with a dignity marked by displeasure.

"I hope you will never regret it, Cecilia," she said severely. "At any rate, remember that my offer is still open to you. Good night!"

"Good night, Adelaide!"

The trapdoor was then pushed up by a daintily gloved hand, which Heathcote had much ado not to seize hold of. He was torn between a wild delight and a horrible sense of the coming catastrophe. He felt he could never let her go again, and he wished the earth would open and swallow him up.

"Cabby!"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"I want you to take me to a shop."

"Eh—what sort of shop?"

"Oh, you know—where you can buy everything—food, and wine, and cigars, and clothes."

"A—a stores, ma'am?"

"Yes, that will do."

Heathcote turned his horse slowly round. At any rate, this was a reprieve. Perhaps at the shop she would dismiss him, and then at least he would escape the full humiliation of his discovery. The hope buoyed him up, but was doomed to destruction. Mrs. Heathcote St. John merely nodded at him as she left the cab.

"You'll wait there, cabman?"

"Yes, ma'am."

He caught a glimpse of her upturned face, and, for no particular reason, lost

his nerve completely. No sooner had she disappeared behind the glass doors than he whipped up his horse, and swerved wildly out of the big thoroughfare into a side street. An enraged policeman shouted all the anathemas of the law after him, he narrowly escaped a coster's cart, but he never drew rein until three miles lay between him and his avenging fate.

Then he pulled up, and allowed his panting horse breathing space, and himself a moment's thought. Obviously the first thing his wife would do would be to go to the poste-restante address he had given her, and obviously the best thing he could do would be to get there first, and leave his miserable confession to await her arrival. Afterward he would disappear quietly from her horizon. It was the only reparation he could make her.

He was about to act on the idea, when a stiff-looking gentleman of military aspect hailed him from the curb. Heathcote struggled against a strong inclination to make off a second time, but the reflection that he had not earned a penny so far brought him to his senses. After all, the job might be a short one, and as he knew his wife, she would be in the stores at least an hour. He would have time and to spare.

"Yes, sir?"

"Drive me to Euston as quickly as you can." The military gentleman put his foot on the step, and then fell back onto the pavement. "You silly fool! Why didn't you tell me you were engaged?"

"I'm—what?"

"Engaged, you jackass!"

Heathcote opened the trapdoor, and peered in. Then he sat back with a gasp.

"Good Lord!" he said. "I had forgotten!"

The Jenkins family were at supper when the door opened suddenly, and Heathcote stood on the threshold. He was very pale, his hat was at the back of his head, his tie under one ear, and in his arms he held a bundle wrapped in a horse rug.

"Save me, hide me, bury me, do something with me!" he said. "By this time the law's after me! I've kidnaped my own son!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Number four-seven-six-aught Paddington."

"Number what?"

"Number four-seven-six-aught Paddington."

"All right—wait a moment."

Pause. Mrs. Dechesney frowned round the handsome library, and amused herself in the interval by playing nervously with a paper knife. Then the telephone bell rang again.

"Is that Greene & Greene?"

"Yes."

"This is Mrs. Dechesney, of Portman Square. I want to speak with Mr. Samuels at once."

"Mr. who?"

"Samuels."

Pause.

"Sorry, but no one of that name in this office."

"Nonsense—think again. Samuels—S-a-m-u-e-l-s—a short, heavy-looking man, with an ugly face."

"Sorry. Would Jones do? Answers to the description."

Mrs. Dechesney rang off. She was very angry, and she was just on the point of sitting down to write an indignant note to the head of the office to complain of the impertinence of its subordinates, when a discreet cough drew her attention to the fact that she was no longer alone. She turned round with a start, and found a short, heavy-looking man, with an ugly face, seated in her favorite chair, and smiling affably at her.

"Jeremy—Mr. Harris—Mr. Samuels, whatever are you doing there, and how did you get in?" she demanded, with the icy calm of a person who feels that he has reached the limit of all things.

Mr. Samuels' expression remained irrepressibly amiable.

"At present I am innocently doing nothing," he said. "I came in by the usual entrance—the door—and if you

didn't hear my knock it was because you were talking too loudly down the telephone. It's a bad habit of yours, Adelaide. You should remember that distinctness, not noise——"

Mrs. Dechesney waved her hand.

"Thank you. I have managed to make myself intelligible through a telephone for a considerable number of years without advice, and I hope to continue successfully to the end. All the same, I am glad you have come. As I suppose you heard, I have been inquiring for you at Greene & Greene's."

"I heard you asking for a short, heavy-looking man with an ugly face. I cannot believe that you meant me, Adelaide."

"The fact remains. Curiously enough, however, the firm did not even seem to know of your existence. Perhaps you can explain."

Mr. Samuels looked blank.

"I can't," he said.

"And yet you were in and out of the St. Johns' house for about a fortnight in the capacity of one of Greene & Greene's valuers. Really, Jer—Mr. Samuels!"

"I have nothing to be ashamed of," he protested doggedly.

"You were there under false pretenses."

"Yes—no—well, not exactly."

"Don't make matters worse." She looked at him with crushing disparagement. "It makes my blood run cold to think of it! You might have stolen something."

"I might. In fact"—his small, deep-set eyes wandered nervously round the room—"I did."

"You what?"

He fumbled in his coat pocket, and drew out a little packet in tissue paper, which he began to unwrap with an almost reverent care.

"You remember that the St. Johns had a little curio case, where they used to keep all sorts of more or less valuable odds and ends," he said. "The fellow who bought up their house and goods bought the case, too, and—well, I thought he wouldn't miss it. It hasn't much value."

"Show it me!"

He came over to her side, and put something that glittered on the library table. She looked at it closely, frowning, and then up into his grave face.

"I—I seem to remember it," she said.

"Yes, it was our engagement ring. I wondered if you would remember." She made no answer, but held the quaint-shaped emerald in the palm of her hand, and he went on quietly: "When you gave it back to me I was feeling too bitter to think much what I was doing. I sent it to Heathcote's father as a curio. A few weeks ago, when I saw it again, I was sorry. I wanted it. You see, I am going back to my old haunts, the gold fields, and——"

"You have an appointment?" she interrupted.

"Yes, not a bad one. But it is a desolate sort of place. I wanted to take something with me that would remind me. I am not young enough to look much into the future, Adelaide. A man of forty-five must content himself with the past."

"I ought to give you up to the police," she said.

"Will you? After all, it is a very little thing, and I was very tempted."

"Nonsense! You are trying to make me believe you still care ——" She rose, almost violently, and her voice shook. "I suppose you have realized that my income has increased year by year!" she lashed out at him.

He nodded.

"I calculated that it would. You live very quietly, considering."

"You are at least frank!"

"My dear Adelaide, you know the workings of the human heart too well for me to attempt to impose upon you."

"Is that sarcasm?"

"Surely not!"

She sat down again, and composed herself with an effort.

"We have wandered from the point," she said. "When you came, I was trying to find out who wrote that letter to Mrs. St. John. Whoever he was, he could not have been a very respectable person. In the first place, the letter was anonymous——"

"Always a bad sign," Mr. Samuels put in.

"In the second place, it contained a most impertinent lie. There is nothing the matter with Heathcote, and there never will be. He has the constitution of an ostrich."

"Happy man!"

"When I began my search," Mrs. Dechesney went on, without regarding the interruption, "I made up my mind that I had to look for some one who has not the slightest respect for the truth. That made the search difficult. If it had been the other way round, the numbers of possible culprits would have been more limited. However, I presume that there is no necessity for my looking any farther?"

Mr. Samuels bowed.

"You wrote that letter?"

"Guilty!"

"There was no stamp or postmark on it. How did you send it?"

"By the grass orphan—Archibald, I mean."

"Where were you then?"

"Hiding behind the hedge."

A spasm passed over Mrs. Dechesney's features.

"You have no dignity, Jeremy," she said, in a muffled voice.

"I never had, Adelaide."

"Don't call me 'Adelaide.' Remember, I may still send for the police. Now go on. Why did you tell Cecilia that dreadful nonsense about Heathcote's being at death's door?"

"Well, it was a kind of gamble. You see, I guessed that you'd come down with your extra thousand pounds, and the story of Heathcote's cab-driving exploits, and I had to do something to counterbalance it. It was a risky bit of business, but I am accustomed to taking risks. As it happens, I won."

"That remains to be seen. You are sentimental, Jeremy. You always were, and you attach an absurd value to sentiment. I admit that you showed some perspicacity in sending that false alarm at the critical moment, but you are a fool to count on lasting effects. Do you really suppose that Cecilia will stand life in Harely Mews for an hour,

especially when she finds that she has been outrageously hoaxed?"

Mr. Samuels took out his watch.

"According to your theory, she ought to be leaving now," he said.

"I am expecting her every minute," Mrs. Dechesney retorted.

"Shall we wait twenty minutes, and then go round and see what is happening?" he suggested.

Mrs. Dechesney shrugged her shoulders.

"You take a great interest in the affair," she said. "A man in your condition——"

"Fallen condition," he put in. "I know you are longing to say it, and my feelings are accustomed to being hurt."

"Very well; in your fallen condition ought to have something better to do than to run round after other people's affairs."

"After all, Heathcote is my nephew," he protested.

"I should not mention the relationship, if I were in your place. He has no great reason for feeling much affection for you."

"You think not? He owes me a great deal."

"Indeed! Allow me to tell you that I consider the allowance you gave him was an absurdity, a downright crime. A young man like that ought to have made his way by himself. Your money ruined them both. Believe me, Heathcote is a changed man since your precious money was lost, and I should not be surprised if in this present misfortune those two did not come together. Jeremy, what are you laughing at?"

"I'm not laughing. I was only calculating that if you went upstairs to put on your bonnet you might be ready to start at the end of half an hour."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I repeat, what does it matter to you whether Cecilia stands by her husband or not?"

He got up and faced her with a new gravity.

"It matters everything—to us both," he said. "We are both playing a last desperate game for the theories on which we have built our lives. One of

them is going to be proved to-night, and one of us has got to admit that he has made a muddle of things. If I'm the loser I'll clear out, and I won't worry you again. If I win——"

"Well?"

"I shall expect you to take this back."

He held out the emerald ring, and she stood holding the edge of the table, with her eyes fixed on his immovable face.

"Jeremy, you must be mad!" she stammered.

"No, I am not; or, if I am, to-night will prove it. My dear, it's no use your pretending you don't care. People of our caliber care once, and for always. I offer you nothing, and I shall not ask you to give up all your money to a dogs' home to prove my disinterestedness. I only ask that you should trust me and marry me."

"Only!" she echoed, with biting sarcasm.

"Yes, only. There is nothing difficult or unpleasant about it, and at the bottom you know you want to."

She shook her head at him.

"Your audacity, or madness, or whatever it is, makes me perfectly speechless," she said.

"Then it has had the desired effect. Suppose you go and see about that bonnet?"

"I shall do nothing——"

"Please!"

She considered him for a moment in silence.

"Jeremy," she said, "you are without doubt the plainest man I have ever had the misfortune to meet; in fact, you are so plain that you are almost attractive. You can telephone for a cab."

CHAPTER XIV.

A curious procession made its way up the Jenkins' narrow stairs. Tilda went as advance guard, with a candle lifted well above her head for the benefit of her followers, who stumbled cautiously after her; then came Mrs. Jenkins, breathing hard with the unaccustomed exertion; Heathcote, with the bundle in the horse rug, came third; Mr. Jenkins, still in his shirt sleeves,

and as taciturn as ever, brought up the rear. Except for Mrs. Jenkins' breathing difficulties, and the squeaking of Mr. Jenkins' boots, there was a profound hush.

Once or twice, when the breathing and the squeaking grew too pronounced, Tilda glanced back reproachfully over her shoulder, and the two culprits rolled their eyes and screwed up their mouths to testify that they were quite aware of the solemnity of the occasion. On the landing a halt was called. The procession formed round Tilda, who had taken up the position of general manager quite as a matter of course, and apparently looked upon her previous acquaintance with the bundle in the horse rug as a reason for bullying every one else.

"Now, you go on, mother," she said. "Father, you're blocking the door. 'Ere, Mr. 'Eathcote, I'll lead the way."

She entered the little room, and Heathcote followed her, treading on tiptoe, as though afraid of waking his small burden. Next his own truckle bed against the wall Tilda had erected a long, boxlike concern which was to serve the new arrival as sleeping accommodation, and a cup of milk stood waiting on the unsteady little table.

"It's for the hangel when 'e wakes hup," Mrs. Jenkins explained, in a self-satisfied whisper. "'E'll want his supper bad, poor babby. And after that long journey, too!"

Very carefully and tenderly Heathcote laid his stolen possession on the improvised bed, and watched with admiring eyes as Tilda deftly removed the minute shoes and stockings from the tired feet. It was remarkable how swift and gentle the clumsy hands could be. The scared, bemuddled scullery maid from Portman Square had become a person of resource and purpose.

"Why, Tilda, I hardly know you!" Heathcote whispered. "You're a perfect miracle."

A broad smile relaxed the intent face. She had just pulled the quilt over Baby Archibald, and now stood back to admire the effect of her arrangements

"It makes a difference when you 'aven't got 'alf a dozen folk a-sittin' on your 'ead," she observed wisely. "That cook of yours she sent me 'alf crazy, Mr. 'Eathcote."

"It shan't happen again," he whispered back. "If ever I do rise to having a cook of my own again, you shall choose her, Tilda."

There was a silence while the cortège stood round the sleeping Baby Archibald, and wondered. Mrs. Jenkins had already expressed her opinion more than once that "there never 'ad been such a beautiful child before," and the same remark was now written all over her face. Even her husband, in defiance of his objecting boots, had ventured to draw nearer, and stood gazing down in absorbed interest.

"If that there kid were mine, I should send for a doctor," he burst out, so abruptly that there was a general start. "I don't fancy 'is color; 'tain't natural like."

"Get along, Samuel!" Mrs. Jenkins retorted. "Wot d'yer know about children? You don't know a pretty, pink, 'ealthy complexshon from measles, and that's the truth. You can go and look after your 'osses, man!"

Mr. Jenkins retired, offended.

"I've said my say, any'ow," he was heard to grumble from the doorway. "'Tain't natural."

Heathcote looked anxiously at Tilda.

"You don't think——" he began.

"Not a bit of it, sir. 'E's as right as a trivet," came the reassuring answer. She put the candle behind the looking-glass, so that the light should not fall on the sleeper. "Won't you come down for a bite of supper, sir?"

"No, thanks, Tilda; I'd rather stay up here. He might be frightened if he woke up here alone."

"All right, sir. I'll bring you up a bit of something warm."

The door closed softly, and he heard the creaking of the stairs as the two kindly women crept down to the little parlor beneath. He was glad they had gone. He wanted to have his son all to himself, to look after him. It gave him a sense of proprietorship such as he had

never had before, and had never wanted to have. He no longer felt so intensely alone.

Very quietly he placed his chair at the foot of the makeshift bed, and, with his chin supported in his hand, watched and waited. As his eyes grew accustomed to the half darkness, he began to distinguish the baby features more clearly. It was almost as though he looked at his own son for the first time. He began to see that the small, flushed face was more than a face; it was the index to an unknown, mysteriously developing character which yet had its root, its very source in him—and in one other.

The thought caused him a shock that was half painful, half joyful. He realized that here lay the mighty link between them, a being that was part her, part himself. The signs of their union were written on the face where for the first time he recognized his own features—and hers. His memory, stirred by the resemblance, painted her for him in vivid colors standing beside the bed, as she had done on that first night when the catastrophe had broken over them. It was curious that he had begun to reckon his life from that hour. All that had gone before was vague and unreal, as though it concerned another man. He had begun to live and love when he had begun to struggle and suffer.

As he sat there, his thoughts wandered back irresistibly to his wife. He wondered what she was doing, what she was feeling. He had left messages at the police station, at his poste-restante address, and had sent round to Mrs. Dechesney, but as yet no answer had come. He imagined her wandering distracted along the crowded streets, and his whole heart went out to her in a helpless pity and love. He cursed himself as the unwilling cause of all her sorrows. She was not made to be unhappy, and he had made her so simply because he was a fool, a good-for-nothing.

He was still seeking vainly for fresh epithets to hurl at his own head, when Baby Archibald stirred restlessly, and groaned. The groan sent a thrill of

nameless alarm through Heathcote's wearied nerves. In an instant he was bending tenderly over the child.

"Hullo, Archie!" he whispered.

The boy's eyes opened, and smiled with a recognition that was yet veiled with pain.

"Hullo, father! Where's mummy?"

"She's—she's out. She'll be back soon."

"That's all right." He wriggled uncomfortably. "We were coming home, you know. Is this home?"

Heathcote bit his lip.

"Yes."

"It looks jolly—there ought to be lots of bears. Is mummy coming very soon?"

"Y-es. I hope so."

"I've got such a pain."

He looked up into his father's face, his own small features twisted into an expression which threatened tears. Heathcote paled visibly. He had never had a pain in his life. Horrible visions of internal complications, appendicitis, operations, deaths, and burials rose up before his mental vision.

"Where is it, little chap?" he asked tremulously.

"It's everywhere," came back the equally unsteady answer.

"You're sure it's not here—where I'm pressing?"

"No—it's everywhere." A long, lugubrious sniff.

Heathcote stood upright, and ran his shaking hand over his head. A pain that was everywhere went beyond his medical wisdom. If only Cecilia would come! If only he were not so horribly alone and helpless!

"Archie!" he said.

"Y-e-s."

"Are you very hot?"

"Boilin'."

"Does your—let me see—does your throat hurt you?"

"Dunno. I 'spects so." A pause, and then "I want my mother!" in loud, dolorous accents.

"You shall have her in a minute," Heathcote said soothingly.

The full realization of his own uselessness was beginning to dawn on him.

Even his son turned from him in moments of distress. He was without doubt a burden on the earth's surface. Archibald tossed in feverish restlessness.

"I want the goblin," he muttered feebly.

"The what?"

"The goblin. *He'd* put it right. Father, do ask him to come! It's such a pain!"

Heathcote groaned aloud. The child was evidently in a raging delirium. Not a moment was to be lost. He ran to the door, and tore it open.

"Cecilia!" he gasped.

Mrs. St. John entered. She was carrying a tray, and her sleeves were rolled up to the elbow.

"I have brought you your supper, Heathcote," she said calmly. "Tilda didn't want me to, but I thought you'd like it."

"When did you come?" he asked.

He was holding on to the edge of the table for support, wondering whether he was mad or not. His wife set down the tray, and looked at him. In the dim light he saw that she was pale—almost as though she had been crying—but there was laughter twinkling in the tired eyes.

"About half an hour ago," she said. "My boxes are coming by express delivery. Tilda is going to make up a bed for me in the attic." She put her head a little on one side. "You look quite nice in your shirt sleeves, Heathcote," she observed critically, "but not very clean. Can one get a bath here?"

"No—eh—yes—that is to say, there is a pump in the yard. Cecilia, how did you come here? How did you know?"

"I knew all along," she answered. "Mrs. Dechesney told me. Besides, I recognized you. It was too funny, being driven home by one's own husband. But you shouldn't have run away like that—and without your fare, too! I don't know for certain, but I think it was positively illegal."

"Why did you come?" he demanded hoarsely.

"My dear, if you ask so many questions, I shall begin to think you are not

pleased to see me. I came because I received a letter saying that you were very ill. Did you write it?"

"Cecilia! You might give me some credit! I wrote you an awful lot of lies, but I've never whined for pity!"

"Well, then, some one whined for you. Who was it?"

"I don't know."

"Do you recognize this writing?"

She handed him a crumpled letter, and he looked at it intently, a look of puzzled recollection dawning gradually over his face.

"It looks like—but it can't be. It's a disguised handwriting. Anyhow, it isn't me."

"You don't need to be so pious, Heathcote, and your grammar is shocking. I suppose it's all the result of your new profession." She came a little closer, and put her hand on his shoulder. "Is this the 'splendid position?' she asked, with a gentle mockery.

"Cecilia, don't rub it in. I know—it was unpardonable, but it hurt like the devil. You won't understand—it was the humiliation." He met her eyes with the courage of despair. "I wanted you to care, to—to respect me a little—and it seems"—he laughed miserably—"it seems I'm not respectable."

"Heathcote!"

A small, complaining sigh interrupted her. She turned quickly.

"It's Archie," Heathcote said, remorse-stricken. "He's got an awful pain, poor little chap. I was just going to fetch some one when you came."

He followed her to the bedside, and they bent over together. Baby Archibald's eyes opened heavily, but lightened for a moment.

"Oh, mummy," he said, "I am so glad you've come. And father's here, too. It's so nice. You're not going away any more, are you?"

Mrs. St. John turned her head a little. Husband and wife looked at each other. Mr. St. John's hand glided along the edge of the box, and touched another and smaller hand. He tried to look as though the contact was accidental, but his eyes betrayed him. Mrs.

St. John's mouth trembled at the corners—whether with tears or laughter he could not be sure.

"No, I am not going away any more, whatever happens," she said. "I don't think we three can get on without each other, somehow."

Then, without any further ado, the big red hand grasped the small white one, and held it without apology.

"And I've got such a pain!" said Baby Archibald, returning to the matter of real importance. "Such a pain, mummy!"

Instantly Mrs. St. John was all attention.

"Where, darling?" she asked tenderly.

"It's everywhere," Heathcote hastened to explain. "And he's feverish, and rather strange altogether. I——"

"You'd better go for a doctor, then. Be quick! I'll stay here and take care of him."

Heathcote snatched up his cap, and ran out of the room. He was stumbling about on the landing, trying to find the wooden banisters, when a hand caught him by the sleeve.

"You've forgotten your coat, Heathcote," his wife said. "How thoughtless you are! Please remember in the future that you are now a breadwinner, and that I—we cannot afford to lose you."

There was a moment's silence. They could not see each other, but it was as though something finer than a hand was feeling through the darkness—some all-powerful, all-divining instinct.

"Cecilia," he said brokenly, "it's such a rotten life. I've dragged you down with me. You won't be able to bear it."

"I shall bear it better than separation from you. And you haven't dragged me down. We've climbed whole mountains since that first awful night, and we are going to go on climbing—together. It's been an awful time, but it has taught us the real value of things; it has taught me to love you both better, Heathcote." She put her head against his shoulder, and he kissed her wildly. "I am so happy," she said, with a tired sigh.

"My own wife!"

"My dear, dear husband!"

There was a very long silence, indeed. And then—

"I think you had better go now for the doctor," Mrs. St. John said gently.

CHAPTER XV.

It was about half past nine at night when two mysteriously shrouded figures made their way stealthily over the cobblestones of Harely Mews. That they were strangers was obvious, for they seemed very uncertain as to their destination, and the lady of the party picked her way with a disgust which suggested unfamiliarity with such a state of things.

"Really, this is the most extraordinary adventure I have ever indulged in!" she said. "I think we had all better go and live in the slums, and have done with it. I thought you knew the road, Jeremy?"

"So I do, only it's so confoundingly dark. Ah, here we are—number eleven. Shall I knock?"

"Do what you like. You know the etiquette of these regions better than I do."

Mr. Samuels knocked, and presently the door was hesitatingly opened. The light of a candle revealed an embarrassed and grinning Tilda and a good-looking hostler, who was leaning against the wall with his hands in his pockets, trying unsuccessfully to appear at his ease.

"Evening, Tilda," said Mr. Samuels, with one foot in the doorway. "Is Mr. St. John at home?"

"Yes, sir, hupstairs. If you please, sir, as you're a friend, I—I'd like to hintroduct you. This is Mr. Jakes. 'E's—we—are—"

She broke off in a nervous giggle, and Mr. Jakes came to the rescue.

"She means that we've gone and got fiancéed, mister," he said. "And about time, too, ain't it, Tilly?"

Mr. Samuels brought his hand down on Mr. Jakes' shoulders with a hearty slap.

"Congratulate you, sir! You've got a jewel, I can tell you! Tilda, I shall

have to stump up a handsome wedding present, shan't I? But I suppose that can wait a bit. Is Mrs. St. John here?"

"Yes, sir, hupstairs with Mr. 'Eathcote."

Mr. Samuels looked back over his shoulder.

"Either your watch or your theory is wrong," he said. "Cecilia is still here."

"Don't be impertinent, Jeremy," came back the answer out of the darkness.

"I'll try not to be. Tilda, can we go upstairs?"

"I'll go up and see, sir. They're in a hawful state of mind. Master Harchibald is hill."

"What!" Mrs. Dechesney had pushed her companion out of the doorway.

"Ill, did you say?"

"Yes, ma'am, very hill. They're waiting for the doctor. Master Harchibald has got hawful pains everywhere, and is a-wandering in 'is 'ead. 'E's always a-hasking after goblins, and such like 'orrors."

"Let me go upstairs at once. This is terrible."

Mrs. Dechesney did not wait for the permission, but went up as fast as her dignity and the steepness of the stairs allowed. Mr. Samuels followed at her heels.

"It's the first door to the left," Tilda called up from the lower regions. "You can't miss it."

On the landing, Mrs. Dechesney paused to take breath.

"Jeremy," she said, "you know it is not in my nature to apologize, but if I have been unjust in this matter—if, in fact, I have been mistaken and misjudged these people—and—and others—I *shall* apologize."

"I shall expect you to do a lot more than that," said Mr. Samuels.

To avoid the necessity of answering, Mrs. Dechesney opened the door. She had forgotten to knock, and it was her fault entirely, therefore, that she found Mrs. St. John sitting on Mr. St. John's knee. It was a most bourgeois situation, but fortunately neither of the guilty parties seemed to mind very much.

"You see, there is only one chair,"

Mrs. St. John explained, rising. "It's very good of you to come, Adelaide, but please be very quiet. Archie is ill."

"Yes, so I have heard. I am thankful I came. Mr.—er—Samuels brought me."

Cecilia looked at the square-shouldered figure standing in the shadow.

"Oh, yes, I remember," she said, rather doubtfully. "Of Greene & Greene's, aren't you?"

Mr. Samuels executed an awkward bow.

"The same, ma'am, at your service."

"And my very good friend," Heathcote put in heartily. "Mr. Samuels, your propensity for driving in hansoms and distributing extravagant tips shall always be held in grateful remembrance."

A small, pathetic groan reduced the assembly to an abject silence. Mrs. Dechesney drew nearer, and her voice sank to a whisper.

"Cecilia," she said, "you and your husband cannot possibly go on like this; it will kill that baby, and I am, as you know, absurdly fond of the child. I should be grateful—in fact, I should look upon it as a personal favor, if you all would make my house your home—unconditionally—now and for always, if you like."

"Bravo!" murmured Mr. Samuels from the background.

Mrs. St. John shook her head.

"It's awfully good of you, Adelaide, and perhaps we shall accept for a few days, until we get things straight, but we are in no real need of help. Something wonderful has happened. Heathcote, you tell!"

Mr. St. John came forward. He held an open letter in his hand.

"I have just heard from Uncle Jeremy," he said. "It seems the old chap has been playing some sort of a game at our expense, and he's not ruined at all. In fact, it was he who bought our house in Portman Square."

"Oh! Now I understand!" Mrs. Dechesney ejaculated. "It's a great relief to me," she added severely to the shadow in the background. "Go on, Heathcote, this is most interesting. I always

knew that Jeremy Harris was mad, but am glad to find he is not a thief."

"There appears to have been method in the old josses's madness, anyhow," said Heathcote, referring to the letter. "He seems to think that his money wasn't doing us any good, and, 'pon my soul, I believe he was right. At any rate, now that he has proved what stuff we are made of, he has offered to give us back our old house and our old funds, or, failing that—in case we have grown to love our independence—a partnership for me in his mining business in South Africa. I've decided for the latter, and, by Jove, if I get the chance, I shall work like a—"

"You'll get the chance right enough, I promise you," said a grim voice. "Nephew, I congratulate you on your choice."

Heathcote started violently.

"Who the—— Who said that?" he demanded.

Mr. Samuels came forward into the light.

"I did, young man," he said. "I'm the old josses."

"You—Mr. Samuels—uncle—it isn't possible——"

"Oh, yes, it is. Now, don't get excited. You might wake Archibald, and you owe that child more than you know. It was he who gave me the hint about you two, and the state of things between you, and I made up my mind for his sake to set 'em right. Shake hands, nephew, and give me a kiss, niece. You're not angry with the old man, are you?"

"I feel far too bewildered to feel angry with any one," said Mrs. St. John. Nevertheless, she recovered from the shock quickly enough to return his embrace with sincere warmth. "And I hope you'll forgive me if I ever said anything rude about you to your face. I couldn't have known, could I?"

"Of course not. And you can go on saying rude things, if you want to. I dare say I deserve them."

He went over to where Mrs. Dechesney was standing, and planted himself before her.

"Adelaide!" he said.

"Yes, Mr. Harris?"

"Do you admit that you were very unjust to them—and to me?"

"Jeremy, is this a catechism?"

"Do you?"

"Y-es."

"Do you trust me now?"

"Yes, I suppose I must."

"And aren't you sorry you've wasted all these years?"

"Jeremy, I refuse to be bullied!"

"Aren't you?"

"Perhaps it was rather a pity."

"Are you or are you not sorry?"

"Jeremy, you are—— Yes, I am, a little."

He held out something which glittered, and put it on her finger.

"It's taken me twenty years, but I've done it at last," he said, with a sigh of satisfaction. "I think, Adelaide, you can give up your house in Portman Square. One will be enough for us now."

"Jeremy——"

Her objections were satisfactorily quashed by the entrance of Tilda, whose scared face announced the arrival of the doctor. A short, fussy-looking little man stood on the threshold, and gazed short-sightedly about him, apparently rather bewildered by the strange contrast in poverty and wealth which confronted him.

"I was sent for in a great hurry," he said. "Will you kindly tell me——"

"Here is your patient," said Heathcote, as though he felt there might be some doubt in the matter. "He has been in great pain, and we are very anxious about him."

As though to confirm his statements, a pathetic groan came from Baby Archibald's direction, and a hush fell on the assembly. The little doctor approached the bed. All the new-found happiness hung in suspense as he made his examination. Heathcote, white to the lips, had put his arm round his wife's waist, as though to support her in the hour of danger. Jeremy Harris had tiptoed with Mrs. Dechesney to the other side of the bed, and Tilda, who had retired

to the passage, swallowed sobs in loud, melancholy gulps.

When the doctor looked up there was a general stiffening. Each in his own way prepared himself to meet the worst.

The doctor's face was scarlet.

"Where is the mother of this child?" he demanded.

"Here," said Mrs. St. John, trembling. "I am."

"Then, madam, might I inquire how many pounds of strawberries you have allowed your son to consume daily?"

Mrs. St. John clung to her husband in stricken silence.

"And to think," said the doctor, "that I should have been disturbed to look after a child who has overeaten himself!" He stalked angrily to the door.

"Good night!"

"And the prescription?" said Heathcote, feeble with laughter and relief.

"Endeavor not to overfeed him for the next twenty-four hours!" the little medico snarled, and the door closed with a bang.

"And, after all, I have the best prescription," said Jeremy Harris.

He bent over Baby Archibald, who had fallen into a light doze.

"Grass orphan!" he said gently.

The sleepy eyes opened for a moment.

"Hullo, goblin!"

"I just wanted to tell you that you aren't a grass orphan any more. You run the risk of becoming the most spoiled brat that was ever born, and it will take all my magic to save you. But, anyhow, it's all right now." His voice sank to a whisper. "The fairy has given up her golden wand," he said. "She sees it's no good against my charm. Your father and mother love you and each other. Have I done my job well? Are you satisfied?"

"Rather!"

"Pain better?"

"Yes—thank you."

"Good night, whilom grass orphan!"

"Good night, goblin."

The weary eyelids fell. Baby Archibald slept the sleep of the just and happy.



WHEN the crash came for Staunton, he looked out on a blank world. Just how blank was made clear to Orcott by the age that had crept upon him in a night, and by the dazed look in his eyes.

Orcott, in New York, had heard the news from Washington through the medium of the papers. Even the more conservative ones had questioned, and the others openly impeached, the honor of his friend; and Orcott, who, in spite of the difference in years, loved Staunton with a love passing the love of woman, went white and red by turns.

"He will stick to it," he said grimly, "and hound the lie to the finish."

But Staunton did neither—he resigned.

The diplomatic service is a courtly dame, and she demands absolute fidelity. Should it waver, even after the matter of a decade, her voice becomes as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. She sent the news to the four winds of heaven, and then turned her back on Staunton—forever!

Staunton—the righteous man!

In a Broadway hotel, two weeks afterward, he laid bare to Orcott his agony; or, rather, so covered it that only the younger man's persistence tore away the wrapping and discovered the raw, hurt edges.

"They might," he said hotly, "have given you the benefit of the doubt."

Staunton, for a moment, stopped his pacing.

"My dear boy, there wasn't any doubt. The President, and the secretary of state, and the head of that particular embassy knew; and the papers passed through my hands. The morning after, all Washington knew it—and France, and Germany, and the rest of the world—that was all."

"Oh, of course, somebody 'peached,' but not you!"

Staunton drew his hand wearily across his brow. He didn't answer.

Orcott put his hands in his pockets.

"What," he said, "are you going to do?"

The older man smiled, a wintry smile, and turned upon him pained gray eyes.

"Grow old," he said at last; "and finally depart in peace."

"It won't be peace," said Orcott doggedly; "and you know it. You'll just turn your face to the wall and snuff out!"

"Good men and brave have done that before me, Philip."

"Oh, yes, and stood up like St. Stephen, and taken a finishing dose of stones—that doesn't make it any easier."

"Life is never easy."

"It's a lot less hard than some of the humans that live it. Why on earth didn't you stick it out?"

"No!"

"Couldn't it be traced?"

"Only to some other person's detriment."

"And you are going to let the other person go scot-free?"

Staunton smiled again, this time with something sunny behind it.

"I'll leave him to conscience."

"You are sure it is 'him'?"

"What do you mean, Philip?"

"I'll bet anything you like it's a woman."

But Staunton, this time, frowned.

"Look here, boy," he said, "you are young, and I am—getting old. But I'll tell you, God's world is a fair world; and the fairest thing in it is womanhood, God bless it!"

Orcott, for answer, leaned forward.

"Could a woman, by any possible chance, have found it out?"

Staunton flushed.

"My dear Philip, don't let my burden wear down your young shoulders." He came over and laid a hand on Orcott's arm. "Now trot along, I'm going to turn in. Good night, dear lad," he said.

That hand on his arm followed Philip Orcott for days. It led him finally to the Pennsylvania Station, where he bought a ticket for the Washington Special, transferring three unimportant cases and two seats for a Broadway "success" to his partner in the law. He was young enough still to be quixotic, and to go through fire and water for a friend.

Besides, he had an idea.

It was an idea that made him, along the route, take out a cardcase that carried a year-old dance order and a withered gardenia. The gardenia had dropped from her hair. The dance order bore her initials against two lines, M. A. B. "Queen Mab" they called her, and the name really fitted. She ushered one, if one was credulous enough, into fairyland.

Orcott, strange to say, had spoken with her only twice during those dances. Through no fault of hers, he had the flower; but she had touched, for a moment, his soul into a flame that leaped to kiss her sweetly mocking eyes. He

might have loved her—if only she could have been trusted.

The cleverest woman in Washington! Who had married a Prussian, who laughed like a Frenchwoman, and looked like a statue of a Greek Pallas—all this for the daughter of an out-of-elbows American politician, who was a widow at twenty-six.

Orcott, in spite of his thirty years, had felt young beside her, like some adoring schoolboy—till she had laughed. Her laugh was like a chime of bells that called to the worship of a false god; it caused his recoil; it was too cosmopolite, too varied. This woman made him think of all the world; the woman he loved must make him think of home.

His idea, pinned to her, seemed intolerable, yet it held him. Staunton it was who had led the way to her side. Staunton to whom womanhood was the fairest, rarest thing on earth, who draped it in white samite, and read its privileges from the prayer book, its *raison d'être* from the memory of his mother's eyes. But, then, Staunton was a bachelor, and had never been put straight.

Orcott, of that race of worldly-wise collegians who knock, through the law, the false bottom out of a hollow world, knew certain other things to be possible to the daughters of Eve, and bore to all women something of the attitude of a jury: "Prove that you're an angel, or I pass verdict that you're the other thing!" It is a sentiment that sometimes comes true; and is, no matter how one expects it, always a shock; but Orcott had worked out by means of it one or two baffling cases, and was of a mind to trust it in this instance.

He wondered, through the rather tedious hours on the rail, if she would remember him. He was not a vain young man. She had all Washington as a gallery to play to; and he had thrown her no bouquets, only purloined a flower from her hair. Like a few other women in a sphere quite apart from her own, she "had a record." She had helped her Prussian husband to achieve a meteoric but rather ignoble career in one of the embassies; and,

when he died, she wouldn't put on black. She was just one of those intangible "Helens" who call Trojan wars into being, and keep you guessing "why"?

He was merely guessing now himself; but he had as data something she had said to him during the dance:

"Oh, these Washington big people—these dear colossals! If Delilah should step in some time, what would happen to the temple?"

And then the chime of bells had called him to a far country; and he had felt like a Samson himself, shorn of all strength save the power to love her.

When he stepped out upon the platform, some time after dark, he felt touched, figuratively and literally, with grime. The idea of hounding, even in the interests of his best friend, a woman! And, in the event of her innocence, what excuse could he make to that New England conscience that had stayed with him, for the sake of his mother, in a New York camping ground? Well, he would make his own restitution. Should she be innocent, he vowed a vow—to love her! He settled it, for himself, just there. The other event would be, of course, to settle *her*; but he felt no joy of the coming battle.

He tipped a smiling negro to lift his suit case into a cab, and took his way to the hotel of his fancy, to spend a lonely evening, showing no results save a couple of burned-out cigars, and an ardor that had grown chilly as the early April night. When he slept, he dreamed that Staunton was saying: "What a fool you are, Orcott, Queen Mab had nothing to do with it. It was I, myself!"

He knew various people in Washington; and it was his work, the next day, to hunt them up. One of them, a woman of accepted cleverness, spoke of Staunton's exodus as "that regrettable affair."

"You surely," he said, in amaze, "do not think him capable of having peddled state secrets?"

"Mercy, no," she cried; "but if one only could be *sure*!"

"I am sure." His tone was one of curt dismissal.

"We all," she hastened to add, "admired Mr. Staunton immensely; but, as I told Senator Davis only yesterday, there has been something wrong for months. This has followed too closely upon the Bevis-Marks affair to make one feel safe. You have no idea how the embassy women glare at one another, and then hurry to say something charming—they've all been *afraid*."

"You mean," he asked quickly, "that the sense of fear is over?"

"Well," she said, "they are weeding out. I mean, Philip, things are gradually being house-cleaned."

He turned irritably.

"Well, the moths will fly out of some of them, but never out of Staunton. That man is as white as a woman."

"Dear Philip, I am a woman; but use some other simile, do."

"Oh," he said, "anything you like. He's *white*, that's all!"

It was also his business, during those first hours at the capital, to gather, from certain quarters, the version of the Staunton affair that could be hall-marked "official." The one definite thing was Staunton's resignation. The rest of it might be gathered under the common heading: "We have nothing to say." Orcott, as an outsider and Staunton's friend, was simply held off by firm, official hands.

He went back to his hotel wondering, after all, whether reason or madness had led him there; and he was inclined, after a strong cigar, to own to the latter. He considered gloomily the idea of getting back, as fast as a train could take him, to New York. Staunton would be moping, and the Raynor case would be coming off, and his partner lacked initiative; but there was something ignominious in so hurried a retreat; and, besides, he wished to see this young Madame Bernsdorf—if only to renew or correct an impression.

He met her, as luck would have it, while calling upon a friend of his mother's the next day. He was just about to leave when she came in, flashing her beauty upon them like light upon a

darkened room. He drew a quick breath, and waited.

A moment later, he made his way to her side. She lifted upon him a pair of arrested, dark eyes.

"May I renew," he said, "a conversation begun a year ago—with Queen Mab?"

"Why," she laughed, "it's 'Orcott, of New York!' You see, I give you also your title."

He shook his head.

"I'm not big enough for that."

She surveyed him gravely.

"You will be—you will be as big as you care to be, provided you keep your head while you are growing."

"Does a lawyer so easily lose it, Madame Bernsdorf?"

"They have been known to." She fixed him with an enigmatic smile. "Are you visiting some one?" she asked curiously.

"No, I am at a hotel. I came in the interests of a friend."

"Ah," she said vividly, "you will find us all here, then, and as kind to you as ever."

"All but Staunton," he corrected.

She paused.

"I forgot—you were fond of him!"

He regarded her steadily.

"He is my best friend."

"But, no. Do you have, then, second bests—a kind for week days and a sort for Sundays?" The chime of bells was going.

"At any rate," he said, "they are all catalogued and numbered, and when one is missing, I feel it, that's all."

"So tender a heart for the law," she cooed, "you make me almost wish to be catalogued myself in your little book. Is it a nice little book, with altogether nice people in it?"

"Staunton is in it, at the top of the list."

"I do not mind in the least," she said, "being put next to Mr. Staunton, provided I am not second best, you know."

But he would not answer.

"May I call upon you," he asked abruptly, "to-morrow?"

She regarded him with a delicate surprise.

"I shall be charmed; but I am a very simple person, Mr. Orcott. I talk neither art nor politics."

"It will be sufficient," he said, "if I may merely look at you."

Yet he knew in his heart that he was lying. He would play grand inquisitor with pleasure, and turn on the thumbscrew without pity—for his friend.

She smiled at him evenly as he turned to go; but he found, during the few minutes of his adieu, her gaze turned full upon him.

He waited for the interview with an impatience that bordered on anxiety; yet when he entered her long, low-ceiled parlor, he was studiously calm. She was standing by a window, and she turned at his entrance, almost nervously.

"Oh," she smiled, "it is Orcott, of New York!"

He bowed.

"It is my hour, I believe?"

"I had thought it mine," she murmured, and then hurried to speak of casual things, till he quietly set them aside.

"I wish you would talk to me of Staunton," he said. "You knew him."

"Yes. And what shall I say?"

"Do you believe he did right in resigning? I know he called here often."

"I have many friends."

"You confess, then, to a friendship for him. I am glad of that."

"I confess nothing," she said lightly, "except that he is a good man and a very foolish one."

"Why?"

"He thinks Washington has a conscience."

"I think so, too, Madame Bernsdorf; and I think, in his case, that it will clear him yet."

She shook her head.

"You ask too much of us. We are diplomatic here, not tender."

"Do not say 'we.'"

"Really? Why not?"

"Because you could be—tender."

"I should tire of it very quickly. I tried it once, on a honeymoon, but the moon laughed and went out."

He wondered dimly if she were bid-

ding for his sympathy, her eyes were quite bright enough for tears. But he slid out from under her charm.

"To go back to Staunton—it's broken his heart."

"How nice," she murmured, "to have a heart to break! I could do with one better than a conscience."

"You have both," he said steadily.

She was silent a moment; then she shook her head.

"Prove it," was all she said.

"Which shall I prove first?"

"Either you like."

"The heart, then. You are sorry for Staunton."

She gave a smiling negative.

"I have never been sorry for any one but myself in my life."

"Then," he said more gently, "isn't it time to begin?"

She turned a little away from him.

"You almost make me want to, Orcott, of New York."

"If you could see him," he added. "He has just turned his face to the wall. It's the thing a strong man does when the light of the world goes out."

She stared beyond him, into the shadow. Suddenly she spoke musingly.

"If it will please you," she said, "I'll admit it. I *am* sorry—it began three minutes ago. You plead his cause well, Orcott, of New York." She rose, smiling; and he knew it for dismissal. He stood a moment, in an embarrassment new to him.

"I return to New York in a few days. May I come again before I go?"

"Surely. Your work is still unfinished. You have yet to prove—the conscience."

The chime of bells, grown sweeter, followed his departing form.

Orcott returned to his hotel hating himself. How had he dared to rest so heavy a suspicion upon so fair a thing as she? Why, she was wonderful, as responsive as some finely tuned instrument to the chord he struck. He admitted her cleverness, and her evasion; but were they not merely a cloak for emotions too vivid for utterance? The thought of a thumbscrew there was intolerable. Besides, Staunton had evi-

dently been no more than one of her many acquaintances in Washington. He must give up hope of finding, in *her*, the key to his friend's misfortune.

Then why was he going back?

He hedged the question. Perhaps he did not really know. But he went again the following afternoon.

His haste to take her at her word seemed unseemly, yet when she met him once more in the long, low room, her manner was warmly kind.

"I'm so glad," she said, "to see some one. I've been boring myself to death."

"I can't imagine your boring any one, even yourself," he said. "How did you do it?"

"Thinking, perhaps, of the time when my little moon went out."

He could think of nothing fit to say; but she was evidently in a mood for confidences.

"I wish," she said, "instead of proving my conscience, you'd tell me how to be happy."

"It's easy," he smiled. "Be good."

She looked across at him.

"It's the one thing I've never tried."

"You mustn't expect me to believe you."

"Oh," she said, "I could prove it! Would you like me to?"

It was his turn to look at her.

"No," he said; and there was passion in his tone. "No."

She sat silent, toying with a string of pearls she wore.

"Do you know the most beautiful thing in the world?" She spoke slowly. "It is to have some one *believe* in you."

He did not answer.

"You do, don't you?" She had returned to her light tone.

"Yes," he breathed, "I believe in you."

"And you came here," she said, "doubting me."

He started.

"Why do you say that?"

"You connected me," she said, "in some way, with Mr. Staunton's affair."

There was a sharp silence.

She spoke again gently.

"Oh, I forgive you. It is the creed of

a lawyer to believe a woman at the bottom of everything."

He rose to his feet.

"You are right," he said, "and you are wonderful." He was looking at her with a strange intensity, while she leaned back, smiling a little sadly into his face. "I am going to show you something," he said, "that is one year old." He drew from his breast pocket a withered gardenia, and held it out to her on the palm of his hand. "It fell from your hair," he said, "Queen Mab."

She gazed steadily at the crumbling little flower.

"Why on earth did you keep it, Orcott, of New York?"

"Why?" His voice shook in spite of his effort to control it. "Because I knew then that it was possible to love you."

"Ah!"

"As I know now—that I do."

She had risen, too, and was facing him, biting her lips. Her eyes were full of tears. Outside, an auto passed along the avenue, sounding the long-drawn, mocking cry of its siren horn. Suddenly she drew a deep breath and, turning, walked hastily to a small, brass-bound cabinet against the opposite wall.

"I will show you something, too," she said, "that is three weeks old. Let us mark it, if you please, Exhibit B."

Her fingers trembled for a moment with the lock of a closed drawer, and she held out to him mutely a folded paper.

He took it with a strange glance at her.

"Please read it," she said, and waited.

It was a memorandum, in Staunton's handwriting, of papers put into his hands by the secretary of state three weeks before.

Her laugh broke the silence.

"Oh," she said, "we are clever, you and I. We have proved both points—you that I have a conscience, I that I am not good."

Orcott had a vague idea of somehow collecting his hat and walking stick and hearing the street door close behind him. He found himself, in the manner of

other pedestrians, walking down the avenue in the direction of his hotel; but the one definite thing was a vision of her standing there, with her brilliant, strained smile, the bit of incriminating paper at her feet. She was a cheat, a deception, anything one liked to call it—yet how he loved her!

He passed through the hotel corridor, with its drone of unfamiliar voices, and went directly to his rooms on the fifth floor. Once there, he had recourse to his usual consolation, a strong cigar; but it had no power to dull the edge of his bitterness. He was sick, and sorry, and ashamed—ashamed of himself for loving her, and of her for being what she was; and sorry, most of all, for Staunton; for, turning over in his mind the fresh knowledge that had come to him, he could see no way out for his friend. There could be no thought of righting him, even had it been possible, at the expense of a woman. Well, he could do the obvious thing—go back.

The day passed without his doing so, and another, and still another. On the third, a telegram from his partner stated briefly:

Raynor suit called for to-morrow. Shall I press Davidge?

And he sent, on hot impulse, the answer:

Press anybody you like, but leave me alone.

He had in his hand at that moment a square little note which had reached him that morning by special messenger:

The prisoner has further confession to make. Since you are handling the case, will you not call once more, at five this afternoon?
M. A. B.

He had never, in his life, so dreaded anything as the idea of meeting her; and yet a reckless joy swept over him that he was, after any fashion, to see her again. The empty procession of the hours passed somehow. In spite of their tedium, he had a strange feeling that they were leading him to some grave ending, some big finality.

The idea held with him all day; and

his face, as he walked again the broad green avenue that led to her home, was set and troubled.

She was waiting for him in the same, low-ceiled room; but the change in her so struck him that he was quite speechless. It was as if somewhere within her a lamp had sputtered and gone out. Her dark eyes had possession of a face markedly pale; they were all that was left of the brilliance that had haunted him for a twelvemonth.

"I thought you would come," was all she said, and she went over languidly, and sat on a divan, leaning back among the pillows and circling her head with one arm.

"Staying away," he muttered, "would have been beyond me."

"I sent for you," she said, after a silence, "to make you aware of—certain facts in the prisoner's life. You are, you see, new to the case." And she sent him a haggard little smile that cut him to the heart.

"There was once," she said, "a woman who had a daughter. The woman was a mother, I presume, yet no one ever gained that impression, but she was clever, and she drilled the girl in the ways of a—not too particular world! Of the girl's father I will say nothing, save that he lived in Washington, and that he was usually in debt."

She paused.

"Are you paying attention?"

He bent his head.

"Yes. Go on, please."

She lifted her head airily.

"The next chapter," she said, "is usually spoken of as the end—the girl found it the beginning—she was married. You see," she added, "I do not say anything about love. It had been left altogether out of her training; but she knew it as an unknown quantity that was a bigger thing than herself, and she tried it honestly."

His eyes sought hers abruptly.

"Don't be worried," she said gently. "It wasn't the real thing—that came later. But to go on with the facts. The man was a gentleman—once removed. Somewhere he had learned how to lie, and to fool people. He tried to fool the

girl; but he couldn't, because she was clever. It was the one asset, her cleverness, against the bankruptcy of her life. Her husband, finding it a salable quality, used it for—purposes of trade. He bought with it the good will of various persons high in the official world. He became, through it, in time, somebody to invite to state dinners; and the girl went with him.

"One day he lied about a certain transaction connected with his embassy, and was found out. The discovery, not the lie, worried him; and one day he took the law of life into his own hands, and dropped—into the thing that follows."

She sat suddenly erect, clenching the hand in her lap.

"Are you paying attention?"

His voice shook.

"Yes. Go on."

"The girl thought first," she said hurriedly, "of going after him, but she had never been a coward—so she lived on, still by her cleverness. People, after a while, forgot her sordid little tragedy, and were kind to her. One of them, a man with gray hair, was *very* kind. His name"—she looked up—"was Staunton. By degrees, the girl made a place for herself at well-set tables in irreproachable houses; and, because there was nothing else left to her, she went on using her stock in trade. She found out various things, and repeated them at vital moments; and the men who listened were grateful. One of them"—she drew off the string of pearls she wore—"valued her information to this amount."

She cast them from her absently, and they rolled from the divan to the floor at her feet.

"Do you want me to go on?" she asked.

He sheltered his face with one hand.

"Go on," he said; but she was suddenly silent.

When she spoke again, her voice fought against the tears behind it.

"Well, it is almost—the end. She had grown, the girl, so used to peddling secrets that she sold one more; a thing that mattered to two big countries on

the other side of the Atlantic. She sold it, and with it her birthright to every kind of happiness, for a mess of pottage. Are you listening? She *betrayed* her only friend."

"God!" he said, and got up, pacing the room.

She followed him with her passionate, bright eyes.

"He left one day, by mistake, his wallet at her house. She didn't go through it—she had never been vulgar—but she read a paper that had dropped out of it to the floor, and used it for her own ends. When he came back and found that it was gone, he knew that *she* knew—but he trusted her, and never said a word.

"Do you want to know," she said, "the cruelest moment in the girl's life? It was when, afterward, he turned and looked at her. I think she knew then," she said passionately, "how Peter felt, and Judas, and all the betrayers of the world."

She covered, for a moment, her face with her hands. When she lifted it, she was trying, once more, to get back her old, light smile.

"It was rather too bad, wasn't it, that just at that time the real thing came to her, since she might never hold it to her heart?"

He stopped his pacing, attempting to speak.

"Wait," she said, "I have not finished. For one hour, perhaps, the girl dreamed of a home, and children, and the things that other women—common women—may claim, if they are good. Then she put the dream away; but she made up her mind, for the sake of the real thing, to do something difficult; and she did it. She put Staunton right."

"What," he cried hoarsely, "have you done?"

She rose, facing him.

"I went yesterday to the embassy people, and from there to the secretary of state, and told them everything. The state department will write him a letter to-morrow. Later, he will be asked to fill his old position. That is all."

"And what," he said passionately, "of you?"

She dashed her hand across her eyes, and looked at him, smiling, through tears.

"I'm going," she said, "to turn my face to the wall, Orcott, of New York."

But he folded her suddenly in his arms.

"No!" he cried. "I'm going to free you, you beautiful spirit in a prison of other people's making, and take you to my heart forever!"



DEFEAT.

MANY there are among our human kind
 Who labor long, and evermore in vain,
 Some deep-desired and beckoning goal to gain—
 Some cherished guerdon of the heart or mind;
 Be it the swain to imperfections blind,
 Be it the soldier of fame's glory fain,
 Be it the statesman in whose teeming brain
 The fetish, power, is like a god enshrined.

Defeat is bitter; bitter to have fought
 And failed, inglorious, in the project planned;
 Through day and nighttime to have striven and wrought,
 And seen fond hopes fall like a house of sand;
 But bitterer by far, beyond all thought,
 To find the prize but ashes in the hand!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE SIEGE



HALT! Who goes there?" The footsteps halted, but there was no further response—proof, in absence of the prompt "Friend!" that the pedestrian was not a soldier. He had stopped, whoever he was, in sheer amused surprise at this sudden intrusion of belligerency on so peaceful a scene. A crescent moon hung in the clear, deep sky, already pierced with stars, above the vast snowy rampart of the everlasting hills ranged about the horizon. The snow-cooled air was faintly scented by the blossoms of a thousand peach trees that broke in a pink foam about the low mud buildings of the station. To be accosted in such a fashion after the laughter, the polo, the easy good-fellowship of that afternoon seemed theatrically ridiculous.

Eustace Hale, standing before that invisible demand, smiled in his lenient good humor at the hidden beauty of the scene about him. True, he was several hundred miles from what was called civilization, but playing polo that afternoon with his English hosts against those splendid soldier centaurs of Sirit, and afterward, in the crystalline sunshine, under the pink foam of the peach trees, taking tea with Englishwomen, dressed as daintily as though the trees were at Hurlingham, he had not real-

ized the isolation; and to be accosted in such a fashion, after the freedom and easy good-fellowship of the past fortnight seemed absurd. But, though reckless to the verge of folly when he saw fun in it, Hale never took needless risks.

"I'm Eustace Hale," he explained blandly, "staying with Major Orme, on my way to the mess."

The sentry, bewildered by information so unexpectedly copious, fell back on his ancient response of "Pass, friend! All's well!" And Hale, with a friendly "Good night to you," continued on his way.

Arrived at the long, low mud building divided into mess and anterooms, whose windows, with their veiled golden light, had led him across the dusty drill ground, Hale found all the station already assembled; no uncommon experience, since, being an extremely leisurely person, he allowed a good deal to arrive before him.

There were but six British officers through the winter in the little fort, including the doctor, so that the mess was a small one; but on the arrival of the commandant's wife and sister, when the melted snow had once more brought Sirit within reach of the world, the small table had been enlarged on two guest nights in the week, and the ladies' frocks and friendliness had done their

best to erase from the men's minds the recollection of their long exile.

The city and state of Sirit lie, lifted amid a medley of interminable mountains, white with eternal snowdrift from the roof of the world, at the most turbulent angle of the Indian frontier. It was certainly the last place at which Eustace Hale had looked to find himself within six months of his leaving New York to have a look at the world generally, and the East in particular. He could not even, when invited there, remember to have heard its name, though, as one of the finest polo players in the States, he might well have learned, even without assistance from Yale, of the place which claimed to have given birth, and gave still a splendid hospitality, to the game to which he was so devoted.

He had taken Japan on his way to India, meaning to get a comprehensive, but still only a tourist's view, of the big country which the English governed with such a queer mixture of bad business and philanthropy; but an introduction, which had been almost thrust upon him, to the lieutenant governor of Burma altered all that. At the mention of his name, Sir Ralph Chater knew all about him. Half the globe's girth had always separated the two men, but common love of a game more potently united them, and Sir Ralph required to be told nothing about the man who was to have played back against England, and asked nothing better than to keep him at Government House for as long as he could.

Thanks to Chater's persistence, Hale found the process repeated in India wherever he stayed. He was passed on from host to host, from Calcutta to Peshawar, sure of a welcome in advance, of any sport that was going, and his pick of the station ponies. He liked it. It was not the India he had read about, nor the India he had come to see. He began to wonder where that India was. He found, instead, a company of good fellows, rather shy and reserved, even when you came to know them, who made a study of sport, and appeared to be running the Empire in their spare time.

The air of inadvertence about the whole thing was almost comic; but it was also, for all that, as he presently realized, the biggest, smoothest, and most successful administrative engine for its man power in the world. He sampled what was to be seen of it from Bengal to Baluchistan, and found himself, with an ever-increasing appreciation, a second time in Lahore, capital of the province which proudly boasts itself "The Sword-hand of India"; and at one of its big, merry dances in Montgomery Hall he made acquaintance with Lettice and Helen Orme, and first heard of Sirit.

It was Lettice—fair, fawn-eyed, and exquisitely fragile—who told him of Sirit, was curious about his history, and from whom he begged more than a brace of dances. Helen's hair was black, her eyes were a sword blue, her figure charming. She told him nothing, asked him nothing, and danced with him but once. Yet it was of her that he was thinking as he stayed at Lahore; it was she, indeed, that kept him there, though it was still with Lettice that he spent his time, and whose friend especially he was supposed to be. But it was at Helen that he was always looking.

From her, most unexpectedly, came the proposition that altered all his plans and thrust on him the decision of a frontier struggle. He had learned from Lettice that they were leaving Lahore, and ventured to express his regrets to Helen, to whom he rarely expressed anything. She looked at him with her tranquil eyes.

"Come with us," she said calmly.

He was a man who seldom showed surprise, whichever way it took him.

"I'll come like a shot," he said. "Where are you going?"

"To Sirit," she replied, "as soon as the passes are open. It ought to be new and amusing, as no one—no Englishwoman, I mean—has ever done it before. My brother, Lettice's husband, is in command there, and has had no end of trouble getting leave for us to go through."

"When do you go?" he asked.

"Don't know," she said. "When the snows do. A big convoy goes every spring, and we're going with it. We're waiting every day to hear. Are you serious?"

"Perfectly," he said. "Are you?" She nodded. "Why did you ask me?"

"Thought you'd like it," she replied. "They seem to play polo there every day."

"You think that's about all I'm good for?"

"I don't know what you're good for," she answered indifferently; "but it will give you something to do. Besides, it will be nice having you. It's rather a lonely journey."

"They probably won't let me make it."

"Oh, we'll call you something. Lettice is allowed two body servants, and has only one. You might be the other."

"I'll be anything," he said, "that makes it possible."

That journey had been the most delightful experience of his life. The savage scenery, desolate and tremendous, through which the convoy crept, insignificant as flies upon a wall, made an extraordinary setting to the dainty festivity which Indian cleverness confers on travel, especially where the memsahib is included.

The ladies were carried in doolies, riding when the track permitted; he had ridden and walked.

Every evening the little green shelter tents had been pitched on some ledge, amid amazing precipices, with the eternal snows above them, and below, invisible in the darkness, the ceaseless roar of torrents.

They sat close, the three of them, for dinner, about the small, clear fire, the ladies swathed in furs, after the fierce heat of the day, the moment the sinking sunlight turned the white mountain crests to rose. It was an experience unlike any of which Hale had ever dreamed—that gay picnic, with the women's slim shapes and their modish Western dresses, like some exotic flower amid those primeval rocks.

He enjoyed every instant of the days, from the scalding cup of tea, brewed,

Heaven knew how, by the grave, handsome khansamah, and drunk in the white morning mists while the tents were pulled down and packed on whinnying mules, to the last intimate moments round the camp fire before turning in, with the pitch-black ramparts of rock about them under the purple, star-filled ribbon of sky.

Than himself no better companion for such a journey could have been chosen. Impersonal, imperturbable, he could, when occasion required, beguile any woman into regarding him as an elder brother, with whom no ceremony need be used.

Lettice and her sister-in-law learned very quickly to appreciate him in that capacity, and Helen had never a suspicion that he cherished for her any warmer feeling. Indeed, the ardor with which they were greeted at Sirit, the undisguised adoration of all Major Orme's youngsters, who had not, for close on two years, seen a woman of their race, made Hale's attentions appear almost frigid.

They had looked askance at Hale. They grudged him his late monopoly of the two ladies, and felt that, in Sirit, they had no use for another male—and that one a stranger—a conviction confirmed by Hale's bland indifference to it. In that far-away corner, they had never heard his name, but courtesy and convenience made them offer him a game of polo, since, with Johnny Styles come in from Fort Inder, a post twelve miles to the north, his presence enabled a full four-a-side trial to be given to the team which was to play Sirit, whose daring horsemen had never been beaten.

But Hale had them in apologetic surrender at his feet before the game was half over; and on the morrow, when his magnificent hitting saved, a score of times, the garrison goal from danger, and made possible so continuous an attack that, for the first time, the horsemen of Sirit were forced to leave the field defeated, their delight in him went beyond expression.

Once they realized him as a good sportsman, they were able, in the British fashion, to see all else there was

of good in him; and the friendly abuse with which, by the whole mess, his unpunctuality was assailed proved how warm and familiar was his footing with its members. He made his apologies to the ladies, and, as an excuse for his lateness:

"Those sentries of yours are growing so talkative," he said to Orme.

A frown in the commandant's eye warned him off the subject; but a note brought to Orme, the moment the ladies had retired, which caused the immediate disappearance of the officer of the day, renewed his suspicions.

"Anything up?" he inquired, selecting a cheroot.

Orme nodded.

"Just what it's hard to say. Two of our Risaldars were cut down in the bazaar. May have been just a private bit of spite, or the fuse of an organized explosion which has gone off prematurely. You can't tell with these beggars when or how they'll have you. They'll be hanging on your neck to-day, and cut your throat to-morrow; and all without prejudice to your good opinion."

He made light of it; but that, Hale reflected, was the English way, and not always a wise one; but he was preoccupied all the evening, and at the end of it, as they went back to their quarters, it was plain that unusual precautions were being taken for the safety of the fort.

Next morning serious confirmation of intended trouble was forthcoming. Styles had sent a runner from Fort Inder, bearing news of a projected rising, with inquiry as to what, in the event of it, he was to do with his command.

Fort Inder was immensely strong. A torrent swept three sides of the rock on which it stood, and it could hold out against anything but starvation and artillery. Styles loved it, and asked nothing better than a siege. If he should be beleaguered there, Orme could not retire from Sirit, nor had he sufficient force to extricate his lieutenant. But the fort at Sirit could not hold the Inder garrison in addition to its own,

so that if the one fort were evacuated the other would have to be, and both forces retire together to the nominal frontier.

For such a movement to be successful, it would have to be determined on before any actual outbreak, which left Orme with the alternative of retiring in time, perhaps from nothing, or retiring from something, and perhaps too late. If the Khan of Sirit meant business, the retreating force would have to fight for its existence every inch of the way out of that inhospitable country, and the chances of success were none too rosy. On the other hand, if, in the fort, they survived surprise, they could count on holding out until an expedition was sent to relieve them; but Orme was well aware that the India Office would infinitely prefer a disastrous retreat for his small force to the expense and embroilments of having to fit out a big one, and that, at home, the honor of the British flag in that remote corner would not be weighed against an inevitable increase in the budget, and the uncomfortable necessity later of having to behave like conquerors.

Meanwhile, Sirit slept in the sunlight like a dozing cat; the bodies of the murdered Risaldars were surrendered, with promise of vengeance on the offenders, and blood money to the full tale.

"Altogether too obliging not to mean mischief," was Orme's comment. He did not like it. The khan was a hard bargainer when he meant to pay.

Still, there was nothing to be done. Through his spies and agents, Orme could feel the plot hatching about him, but there was no visible sign of it—nothing to which objection could be made, or on which action could be taken. He sent word to Peshawar of his discoveries and suspicions, and never relaxed the vigilance of his precautions.

Life in the fort became rather compressed and uncomfortable. Without, it appeared as carelessly trustful as before; but within was ceaseless vigilance. Polo went on, for the ground was nearer the fort than the city, and the fort's Maxims could sweep the space between. The ladies were still allowed

to ride—their riding was an advertisement of fancied security—but patrols traversed unobtrusively all the avenues of danger.

Still, nothing happened; Orme's wariness had evidently hampered whatever schemes were afoot. But Orme was not deceived.

A week went by, then at the Wednesday market for the supply of the fort there were no sellers. The khan was, by treaty, responsible for the sufficiency of this market; its closing could only have been brought about by his commands. Orme at once demanded satisfaction; the khan expressed polite surprise, said that the country folk could not afford to sell at the fort prices—which were higher all round than in the city—and suggested a durbar in the palace to discuss a new arrangement.

Orme was the last man likely to be taken in such a trap. He gave the khan forty-eight hours to reopen the market, and informed Peshawar that, in the absence of further messages, they might regard him as besieged.

A council of war was held as to what action must be taken if the khan proved obdurate.

While it was in progress, Hale turned up at Orme's quarters, and found the same subject in debate, and on it the ladies very definitely divided. Mrs. Orme was called away, and Helen turned to Hale.

"I'm sure you agree with me?" she queried.

"I'm certain I do," he answered. "About what?"

"That we should leave Sirit at once," she explained.

"Why do you want to go?" he asked.

"I don't want to go. It's Henry I'm thinking of. They'll never forgive him if he lets them in for a big, expensive expedition."

"What does Mrs. Orme say?"

"Oh, she's absurd!" the girl replied hotly. "She doesn't give a thought to Henry's career. She's against leaving, merely because she thinks it would be a stain on the flag."

"And Major Orme?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"Of course, he'd like to stay, but he knows he oughtn't to."

"And how about the rest of them?"

"Oh, naturally they're all for holding on and making a fight of it. They won't be responsible, and will come in for any medals and nice little things that are going."

"And are you sure staying here would get your brother into trouble?"

"As sure of it as he is," she said.

"Simla never forgives the men who make scrapes for it."

"Then why does your brother hesitate?"

"Oh, he's just as silly about the honor of the flag as Lettice is. I've no patience with such sentiment. It's all very well for viceroys and people like that, who are responsible for the flag; but it's sheer lunacy in the men who stand to be broke by it."

Her splendid figure, the more splendid in its indignation, made so fine a picture in the noonday dusk of the room that Hale could not refrain from provoking it to fresh expostulation. It was strange that, of the two women, it was Lettice—fair and fragile—who chose war, and the risk to her life and to her husband's future in preference to a slight on her country's honor; and dark, daring, undaunted Helen who preferred the tamest of surrenders to endangering her brother's career.

Hale had never loved her more than in that moment of his deep dissent from her ideas, but he only expressed enough of that dissent to prolong the attitude of scornful antagonism which so well became her.

If he had had doubts on the point before, the whole of his being determined in those moments of admiration to marry her, and his immediate preoccupation was to discover the way. Plainly Sirit, where he could see her always, and where there were no rivals worth considering, offered the best chances, and he became on the spot an advocate for its continued occupation.

When she appealed to him, he found himself hedging.

"Well, you see, Miss Orme, we Americans are reckoned kind of lunatics about a flag. If it was the Stars and Stripes instead of the Jack on this mud fort, I fancy we'd keep it flying as long as there were any old nails left for the job."

"Oh, yes," she agreed, with enthusiasm, "so would I, if it was my flag, too, because you're all proud of it, from the President downward; but we only care to use ours for street decoration."

Orme came in from the conference at that moment, his face still dark with the cloud which for some days it had carried. His sister attempted no inquiry, but when she had left the room Hale asked if any decision had been come to.

Orme shook his head.

"They're all against me," he said, "as any decent soldier would be. The right game for a soldier is to stick here and fight; but I'm political officer as well as commandant, and fighting is the one policy the government has no use for."

"And what will happen if you let them in for it?"

Orme shrugged his shoulders.

"It will be the end of me politically, I suppose," he said; "but that's not what matters. If I let these beggars turn us out it will be a blow to our prestige all along the border. Something bad elsewhere is bound to come of it. Also, I can't look to lose less than a third of my force in getting out of the country."

He stopped; the cloud darkened on his face.

"I can't bear, on such a job, to lose my men," he said apologetically for his weakness.

"Does that mean you're going to stay?" asked Hale.

"No," said the other. "We're going to quit, if Styles thinks he can bring his chaps safely here from Inder."

Hale stared with unconcealed astonishment.

"You Britishers are the queerest cards," he said. "And what if Styles can't come?"

"We'll sit here and see it out."

"You're sending to Inder?"

"Yes; I'm just wondering whom. We don't want to rouse suspicions."

"Send me," Hale suggested.

Orme looked at him with surprised appreciation of the idea.

"Good man!" he exclaimed. "Nothing could be better. But I can't pretend there'll be no risk."

"The fun would be out of it if you could," said Hale. "I suppose the sooner I'm off the better?"

Orme nodded.

"Look here—I won't write," he said. "It will be safer so, in case anything should happen to you. I'll come over to your quarters and explain just what you have to put to him. It's not an order, you see."

"Right!" exclaimed Hale gayly.

As he crossed the courtyard, he met Helen Orme, with her brother's big deerhound in leash.

"Come to Inder?" he said lightly.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"In an hour."

Suddenly a plot to win her—deep, dangerous, indefensible—took shape before him. The whole daring, unregenerate Adam in him responded to it with delight.

"Come, too?" he smiled.

"I! They wouldn't let me! What are you going for?"

"To bring Captain Styles and his merry men back to Sirit."

"Then we're going to clear out? Splendid" she exclaimed delightedly. "Oh, but I'd like to be going with you!"

"Come!" he urged. "You can take a syce as if just to give the mare exercise, and I'll send him back with a note when we're clear."

To that the unregenerate Eve in her responded.

"I will," she declared, her eyes sparkling. "You're going quite alone?"

"But for you," he told her.

Fort Inder could be reached in an hour's hard riding. Hale took longer, to throw the khan's spies off the scent; but the appearance of the expedition sufficed for that. The runners lay down behind a rock as soon as out of sight

of the city, and dozed, waiting in the shade of it for the riders' return. The khan, their master, paid only by results.

At Inder, Hale found in Styles a willing conspirator. He had stored the fort for six months, and asked nothing better than to eat it empty.

"Look here!" explained Hale, at the close of their secret conclave. "I'm behaving like a villain, and know it; so say what you please. Orme's message was that, if you could bring your lot safely to Sirit by to-morrow morning, you were to. My suggestion is that you can't."

"In that case?"

"Orme will sit there and you here till you're relieved."

"He won't mind that?"

"He'll thank Heaven for it—if it's forced upon him."

"If it's my wig, and not his, that will have to stand the racket."

"They can't touch you. You're practically beleaguered already. I'm your witness."

Styles laughed.

"You're a warm one," he said. "But, here—how, if I'm beleaguered, are you and the lady going to get back to Sirit?"

"We're not," explained Hale calmly.

Styles' eyes widened as they took in the depravity before him.

"My word!" he murmured. But such frank effrontery was too much for him. "You don't propose that Miss Orme's to stay here during the siege."

"Why not?" asked Hale.

"No, no, my dear chap!" objected the other. "You can't do that—it's not a fair game. How's a lone woman to manage in a place like this?"

"Marry me," said Hale simply.

"Oh, ho! So that's it?" cried Johnny Styles. "Is this your concern for the British flag?"

"I don't care a bad fig for the British flag," said Hale blandly; "but you can have no grudge with me on that score, as it will be owing only to me if the old flag continues to flap up here. Then, as to Miss Orme: There are two forts and two ladies—one in each.

That's fair, isn't it? If there isn't one in each, there's one in neither; and a damn poor chance of either reaching India alive. You believe that, don't you?"

Styles nodded.

"Sheer madness, trying it," he growled.

"Very well, then, I don't see what you've got against me. If I hadn't tricked Miss Orme into Inder, she and her sister-in-law would probably have been dead before the week was out, and the vultures, or these Sirit savages, making free with their bodies. Seems to me I'm the salvation of you all round."

"If it runs to a brevet, I may forgive you," murmured Styles. "You've come, anyhow, nearer the truth than you know. We might have got to Sirit to-night; but, from what I've learned of their plans, they'll be round us to-morrow. Break it to the lady while I send off my messenger."

The breaking proved a rather dislocated affair. Helen, furious at the failure of her hopes, suspecting treachery to her brother's interests, recoiling from the prospect of imprisonment with a fort full of men, declared that nothing would induce her to remain at Inder; she would ride back that evening, if she had to ride alone.

Hale quailed before her vehemence. He had had half a mind to declare his love, and make confession; but he was a long way from that now. He was beginning to see the difficulties in marriage by capture. He took a very serious tone, assumed an air of extreme depression, and charged himself generously with everything that had taken place. As for riding back, he dismissed the idea without argument; Styles would be only too pleased to be rid of them, had he dared to let them go.

Helen, a horse being refused her, was forced to submit; but she remained silent, implacable, withdrew at once to the room prepared for her, and made dinner a meal which both the men were thankful to get over.

"I shall walk back to-morrow, if you decline to let me have a horse," she

told Johnny Styles, as she left the table.

But the morrow saved Styles from that difficulty, if it landed him with another. Helen was roused at dawn by a wild racket of rifle fire, followed by a fury of demoniac yells. Sirit had attempted to take Inder by surprise, but the surprise was entirely for the men who attempted it. Scattered sheaves of dead and dying lay in swathes before the Maxim ports when the assault fell back, baffled, from the walls, and the rifle fire from them of the aroused defenders sent the khan's men flying to the hills for cover.

Hale met Helen in the courtyard. They were both wearing, perforce, the riding things they had arrived in; but hers was clearly the more finished toilet. He hoped that the change from peace to war would have wrought a corresponding change in her; but she was still cold, aloof, resentful. It angered her to have to live in a riding habit, though, luckily, not a safety one; and at breakfast she amused Styles by urging him to make a break for Sirit. Johnny, perfectly happy, now that the fighting was begun, laughed at the suggestion.

"Did you ever see a cat come out of a tree to face a pack of hounds, Miss Orme?" he inquired dryly.

"Then how long are we to be kept penned in here?" she asked imperiously.

"Ah!" he murmured. "I might be able to tell you that, if I were the khan, the viceroy, and the commander in chief combined."

"For a week?" she hazarded.

"You won't come out of Inder in a week—no, nor in a month—unless you come out dead," he said gravely.

She shut herself up with the tailor and a roll of hard country silk which Styles produced, and appeared at dinner in a costume which seemed to the two men a wonder of workmanship, and certainly became her very well. She felt a good deal more comfortable, but Hale's advances toward the old footing met with no encouragement.

The next day, during an attack on the fort, he took it upon himself to

remove her forcibly from a position of danger.

She turned upon him with such fierce resentment that Hale thought she was going to strike him.

"You'll be good enough not to touch me again, Mr. Hale!" she exclaimed angrily.

"That will depend on your good sense," he replied coolly. "I'm responsible for your being here, and consequently for your safety."

"You're responsible for nothing of the sort," she retorted. "I came entirely of my own accord."

"Possibly; but it wasn't of your own accord you stayed."

"I stayed because return was impossible," she told him.

He shook his head.

"You stayed because I thought it was better for all concerned that you should. To save you and your brother, and most of his force, I decided that you must be shut up in Inder."

She stared at him with blazing eyes.

"You lied to me, then!"

"I told you you couldn't return. You couldn't. Captain Styles agreed with me that the only chance for every one lay in sticking to the forts. We've saved your brother from blame by leaving him without choice, and given him a chance of making a name for himself."

"And may I ask why you, who are not even an Englishman, have gone out of your way to meddle in our affairs?" she asked icily.

"You're the cause," he smiled. "You asked me to come, and I, with every excuse but encouragement, fell in love with you."

"And this is how you show it?" she flung at him.

"This is how I show it," he agreed simply. "I've saved your life and your brother's honor, and made myself an abomination to the eyes I worship."

"At last you've said something with which I can agree," she replied bitterly, as she left him.

She went to her room to feed upon her fury, but she found herself thinking of Hale as she had never thought

of him before. He forced his way through her rage as something she had to reckon with; that was a new point of view, and altogether to his advantage. Helen Orme was a girl who noticed men very little. They had to do something to make her look at them; they had to do a good deal more to make her think of them. She was thinking of Eustace Hale.

The novelty of being besieged soon turns into monotony, but the monotony lays the greater tension on the nerves. It reduces all other feelings to a strained suspense, which is a great dispenser of differences. In thirty-six hours Helen was tending the wounded, and on terms of perfect amity with Hale and Styles.

The common, ceaseless danger evaporated all the difficulties of her isolation; both men treated her with the natural simplicity of brothers, and she could have felt no less unembarrassed had she been their sister. The siege seemed to her to go on endlessly; the days to join together into one shapeless, confused length of light and darkness, divided only by nursing, and eating, and sleeping, with the breathless silence of the mountains broken by the savage thunder of war.

It was sixty-three days before they heard the guns that meant relief, and a week before the end. Eustace Hale was carried into her ward, dangerously wounded.

He had proved an invaluable asset to the defense, undauntably cheerful, quite indifferent to danger, and by far its finest shot. His amazing marksmanship had proved too deadly a pestilence for the snipers to survive. His face showed no concern when he was carried in, and, unable to speak, he smiled indomitably at the gravity in Helen's countenance.

There was no surgeon, the hospital assistant was not skillful; Helen tended him night and day, trying desperately to keep the life in him till skilled help could come.

During the night before the relief, she thought he was going. She knelt

beside the charpoy on which he was lying, to read by the dim candlelight the whisper on his lips.

"Forgive you?" she repeated unsteadily. "Oh, my dear—my dear, it is I you must forgive for only knowing now how much I love you!"

The tears fell down her cheeks upon his hand, but there flickered in his eyes a faint smile of understanding, and his mouth tried to shape some word of endearment or gratitude.

Helen sat by him through the night, holding his hand, as though she would hold him back from death. He dozed fitfully, and, just after the dawn had made the window a gray space in the wall, the still air trembled with the sound of artillery.

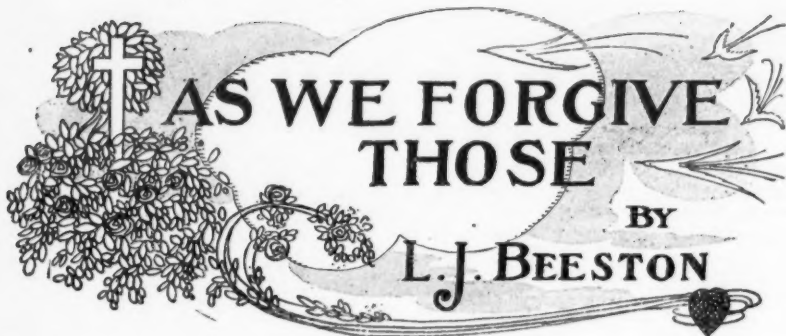
"Guns!" she whispered, heartsick with the irony of succor which had come too late for him. But she saw by his face that he had heard them, too, and his smile seemed stronger, as though love had given him another link with life.

By noon the relieving force was in the fort, and, paying no heed to the wild outburst of relief and congratulation about her, Helen demanded a surgeon, and carried him off to her patient. He shook his head after he had examined the wound; but he was one of the many clever operators in the British service, and three weeks later Hale was lying in the shade of the courtyard, able to do no more than raise his head, but well enough to look happy, and with sufficient of his old self to explain to the lady beside him his sense of the unfairness of the way he had won her.

She leaned over him, laughing gently and happily.

"Let's hope it will be a lesson to you," she said, "that the gods may sometimes plague you with the favors you snatch from them. You're sentenced, this time, to keep what you've stolen—which is I. That's going to be your punishment."

"I think I can bear it," he breathed contentedly.



AS WE FORGIVE THOSE

BY
L. J. BEESTON

THE waiter brought a London and Northwestern time-table. He shot the complacent, curious glance of his class at the white face of Tredegar bending over the thin pages. He noticed the slight trembling of the fingers, the contracting of the brows. But he stopped at that. One may conceive romances without number based upon a pale, good-looking man feverishly turning the leaves of a railway time-table, in the *salle à manger* of a Piccadilly hotel, during the dining hours.

Alfred Tredegar ran a well-manicured nail down the tiny figures. Yes, there it was—an eight-o'clock train to Liverpool. He had seen it in six other time-tables during the day—this day weighted with leaden hours. He had even engaged a compartment in one of the first-class coaches; and yet he was again assuring himself that he had made no mistake. Well, when one is tortured to the verge of emotional insanity one must do something.

He paid his bill and went out of the place. He had dined there at least four nights a week for years. It would not see him again if—if that compartment in the train hadn't been taken in vain.

He scowled at an importunate cabman, and turned his step toward the Green Park. All this London roar and glare jarred on his nerves. Within a few hours, if all went well, the Atlantic calm, the limitless sea, the unfettered winds.

And she!

If any one had told him, three months back, that such a temptation would have put any strain upon his honor, he would have felt like knocking his informant down. And now—now honor, wealth, life almost, were but meaningless names that asked no serious consideration.

He walked to his flat, which overlooked the park. Williams, his servant, was pulling down the blinds.

"Any one called, Williams?"

"No one, sir."

"You have packed the things I mentioned?"

"They are all ready, sir."

"You can go, then. Be back any time this side of twelve."

"Thank you, sir."

Tredegar dashed a pen across a sheet of paper. What he wrote was:

I am sorry to dismiss you so sharply, Williams. I inclose you a check for fifty pounds. You are an excellent servant, and I have found no fault with you.

He sealed this in an envelope. He would have liked to take Williams with him; but *she* would, of course, prefer him not to do so.

He tossed an overcoat on top of his packed boxes. There was now nothing to do but wait—and listen. He walked up and down, smoking furiously.

Oh, how he wanted her! How aimless, and idle, and empty seemed everything and every one. But three—two months back there was so much enjoyment in his circle. Those good fellows his friends; those admirable women he so sincerely respected. The valued in-

fluence of Lord Greyfriars which was to do so much for him in the diplomatic service. He had thought these things realities.

"But only one thing is real, and that is my love for you, Kathleen; my love so great, so consuming, that it stoops to a deadly crime to win you."

Tredegar spoke the words aloud, though he was alone. He put out his arms as if to receive her tangible presence. But she was not there, and a cold dew started upon his forehead as he glanced at the clock. Time had crept along so slowly all the day; and now it was beginning to race. Each passing moment that did not bring her began to knock at his heart, to sicken him with dread.

"She must! You must, Kathleen!" he said huskily. "If not——"

There was a step upon the stairs. A gasp of joy relieved his agony. He flung open the door, and——

Yes, it was she.

He put out his arms in the ecstasy of his adoration, forgetting. She moved back slightly, very pale, looking at Tredegar with horrified eyes. He controlled himself.

"Thank you for coming," he said simply.

She found no reply save that fixed expression of terror-hate, almost.

"Come in," said Tredegar, pushing forward a chair.

The precious moments were flying; the streets at that hour were congested; they could scarcely hope to get to Euston in less than fifteen minutes.

"I have come to—to——"

She broke off, putting a gloved hand to her throat. Then she glided forward, and sank into the chair. There was grace in the movement, despite its misery. Tredegar allowed his eyes to feast themselves upon her presence—her costume of dark heliotrope, the big, black hat, the fur at her throat, her soft brown hair. She was not pretty; she was not even young. Her principal charms were her musical voice and beautiful figure.

"To let me prove to you that never

man loved as I love—Kathleen? My God! If you but knew!"

"To ask once more for mercy," said she, in the merest whisper.

He closed the door very softly. Then he stood looking at her. His gaze was not returned. She was staring in front of her, at the blinds drawn over the windows. And a shiver of a terrible emotion suddenly shook her like a leaf.

"Kathleen, if I loved you less, I might listen to your appeal," said Tredegar hoarsely. "But I have sold my conscience for you, and I must have you. That is all I know, all I think about. You can call me no harder names than what I apply to myself. Trust yourself to me, test the depth of my devotion."

She began to tremble violently.

"I—I almost told him," she exclaimed wildly. "I wish I had the courage. You coward!"

"Why didn't you, then?" said Tredegar, unmoved. "I wish you had. Heaven knows I'd sooner have you tell him than let me do it, than force me to do it. You may be his wife——"

"May be!"

She leaped to her feet with the echoed words, a wave of crimson rushing to her brow.

"I beg your pardon. You are, of course you are, Baxter's wife," said Tredegar steadily. "But if he learns the truth—and I swear to you he shall learn it—what, then? What can reasonably follow the shattering of his dream, the spoiling of the fool's paradise in which he has lived these years? Of course, one cannot predict a result with absolute certainty, for I do not think that any man is placed in the extraordinary position to which your husband must be awakened. But when we consider the greatness of his love—for a man who waits ten years, who endures ten years of absence, as he waited and endured, must truly love—we must presuppose nothing but tragedy when the scales fall from his eyes. When that tragedy comes, you will turn to me."

"You!"

"To the shelter I shall offer you—yes. Or, if you are mad enough to think

that he could possibly pardon so frightful a wrong as you have inflicted upon him, what would that forgiveness be worth? Be sure it would exist but in its name. The usual superficial glossing over, the inability on his part ever to forget. He would hate you."

"Stop!"

"Hate you, I say. Is anything else possible? There, I stab you only to heal; I hurt you only to console. Kathleen, you are my idol. Come to me—with me—now! Don't you see how that would open to him a sure avenue of escape? That would be freeing him from an intolerable position. And the law which would do that would give you to me. Where you wish I would take you, grant your smallest desire, live just to make you forgive me, to lessen your contempt, to win your heart by degrees—no matter how slow, so long as I do win that priceless treasure in the end. You ask me to be merciful? It is I who implore you to have pity. I tell you—"

"Do not touch me, or—or I shall kill you!" she screamed, recoiling from his outstretched arms.

"You are killing me."

"I hate you!"

"No woman ever hated a man who loved her. Do not be frightened. I will not touch you. Calm yourself. You would not be here unless you meant to grant my prayer. I can wait. I have engaged a compartment in the night mail train. If you act sensibly, you will not delay another minute."

"I refuse! You hear me? I will never, never do it!"

"Very well. You are as free to go, of course, as you were to come. I shall gain you by the longer road, since you will not choose the shorter."

Tredegar spoke calmly, but he was deadly white; and with his handkerchief he wiped a cold dew from his forehead.

She moved toward the door, which he was holding open. Midway she stopped, swayed, then dropped upon a sofa, and burst into an agony of weeping.

Tredegar reclosed the door.

When George Curtiss dined with

Baxter and his wife that evening, he was obviously ill at ease. This was not at all like Curtiss, who was naturally quietly genial, with the philosophic, sure style of the man of the world. Baxter's wife noticed this diffidence, and that Curtiss kept regarding her in a stealthy manner. She left the table before the end of the meal. Her husband went outside with her, with a word of apology to his friend, and came back inside five minutes.

He found Curtiss standing by the window, which overlooked a quiet square near St. James'. The blind was up, and Curtiss was peering downward, obviously interested.

"She will be rather late; the curtain rises punctually at His Majesty's," said he, without moving.

"Not her fault," Baxter grunted, sinking his body into a divan chair by the fireplace. "Her friend could not be ready before, I understand. Kitty is to call for her."

"A lady friend," said Curtiss disinterestedly. "Do I know her?"

"No, nor I. Kitty ran up against her, she told me, this morning, in the Tottenham Court Road. A married girl friend from the States. They fixed up this appointment there and then. We are not allowed to be in it, old chap. Sit down. What are you staring out there for?"

"Some very fine chrysanthemums in the gardens yonder," said Curtiss. "You are nicely placed here."

He really was looking at the chrysanthemums, but suddenly he lowered his eyes without moving his head. A hackney carriage had driven up to the house, and Baxter's wife was passing quickly down the steps. She had changed her dinner gown apparently, for she was wearing an ordinary out-of-door costume of dark heliotrope. Hardly the attire for an evening theater performance, for a woman in her position, Curtiss reflected.

He crossed to the fireside and dropped into a chair opposite his friend. He was there to say something very unpleasant, something which he would not have said to any other man on earth.

He always steered clear of such matters, gave them the widest possible birth. Even now he had half a mind to take an abrupt farewell.

Baxter got up and reached for the whisky and soda which a servant had just placed on the table to his elbow. He was a man with iron-gray hair, a face of the square type, clean-shaven, and large, full eyes. He said:

"The House sits late to-night; and the government will find themselves in a tight——"

"Seen Tredegar lately?" interrupted Curtiss.

"Was here last evening. Billiards. Never seen him in such bad form."

"You like him?"

Baxter half shrugged his shoulders as he handed across the whisky and soda.

"He knew Kitty when she was in Melbourne?" went on Curtiss.

"Yes. That was—let me see—nearly twenty years ago."

"Did you meet him when you were over there?"

Baxter laughed.

"You are interested in Tredegar," he said, sitting down. "Did I meet him when I was in Melbourne? No. At least, I do not remember seeing him. But I had eyes and ears only for Kitty. She was seventeen, then, sweeter than a rose. I came away directly after our engagement, and for ten years I did not see her. As you know, business kept me in England, and I was not in a position to ask her to come over. Then came fortune—with a sudden rush. And Kitty came."

"So Tredegar must have met her after you left. He must have been young, for he is still that. How long has he known her in England—as your wife?"

"Oh, they met and renewed the acquaintance quite easily. Let us talk about something else."

"You must have been pretty deeply in love with Kitty to have waited ten years, to have endured that long absence without a sight of her," said Curtiss thoughtfully.

"And they seemed to him as a day

for the love he bore to her," quoted Baxter gravely.

Curtiss flung his cigar into the fire with sudden decision.

"Old fellow," said he, in a short, sharp tone, "speaking with the privilege of a lifelong friend, I want to say this: Don't you think that Tredegar follows Kitty about rather too much?"

He put his palms on his knees, leaned forward, and looked Baxter straight in the eyes.

He had expected astonishment, then anger. Instead, a heavy flush mounted to the other's forehead, and a slight spasm quivered the muscles of his face.

For ten seconds they stared into each other's eyes. Curtiss breathed more freely. He added:

"To be perfectly plain, the fellow is obviously head over heels in love with Kitty. Haven't you seen it?"

"Yes, I have. What, then?"

The asperity glanced off its object.

"When a man feels like that toward a woman she always knows it," said Curtiss. "Kitty knows it. So do a good many other people. She could easily get rid of Tredegar, of course."

He stopped abruptly, with a silence that was full of meaning.

"But she doesn't. Say it," cut in Baxter, the red flush deepening upon his brow.

Curtiss rose.

"She doesn't," he said quietly.

"I think you had better go," said Baxter, holding the arms of his chair.

"Yes."

Curtiss moved toward the door. He paused midway, and looked back at his friend, who had stiffened in his chair, peering straight before him, with that sinister bar swelling the veins in his forehead. He paused, and looked back. Had he said enough? He was not sure. A word from him, of course, would go a long way, would sink in very deep; but then to-night he felt so terribly uneasy. The evening gown discarded secretly for the heliotrope costume, her nervousness at dinner, her strange pallor——

Curtiss spoke again—emphatically, steadily.

"And if I were you," he said, "I would not sleep on the matter to-night. I'd go round and see Tredegar at once — this hour. Understand me, for God's sake, and—forgive me."

He went out, closing the door quietly.

When he was gone, Baxter turned his head slowly, and looked after him across the room. If another man had spoken those words, he would have killed him. He would have struck Curtiss for them had they not found an echo in the depth of his heart. And this echo still murmured there, the far-away murmur of the sirocco.

He remembered that he had never liked Tredegar, that of late he had grown to detest him. He had not admitted the charge of jealousy. He knew Kitty's love, and that was enough. True, a couple of days back, he had faced a dark hour; but he emerged from the strife victorious. The ghastly temptation to watch her movements, even to speak to her on the subject of Tredegar's eternal presence, he had vanquished.

But now Curtiss had spoken. Of all men—Curtiss.

What was that he had said about acting to-night, at once? Baxter heard the words still in his ears, the harsh, jarring emphasis of the tone which the speaker had used, the voice of a doctor who controls a hysterical patient.

He pushed back his chair, and got up. The past five minutes had had poignant agony, for he reeled, suddenly brain stupefied, heartsick. He went out of the room and straight to his wife's boudoir.

The first thing he saw was his wife's evening gown which she had worn at dinner. She had thrown it upon a settee. Why had she practically hidden it in this room? And why had she changed at all?

Baxter uttered an inarticulate exclamation. He strode to the door to call Curtiss back; then thought better of it. He turned the key instead. The bunch of violets and malmaisons which Kitty had worn at dinner was thrown into the fireplace. Their sad perfume lingered in the room; and forever after-

ward, the fragrance of those flowers chilled his heart, like the breath of lilies that makes us think of waiting graves.

A writing table of rosewood, with side drawers, was along one side of the boudoir. With shaking fingers, and a spot burning in either cheek, Baxter tugged out drawer after drawer, turning over their contents almost without looking at them. What did he expect to find? What ought he to do? God! That he should come down to this level!

Suddenly his heated eyes perceived his own name written upon an envelope. It was the writing of his wife as she used to write years and years ago. It had changed a good deal since then, and now the sight of it made him catch his breath in a dry sob. It was lying under a pile of loose papers in the bottom of the lowest drawer. It was a letter addressed to himself, and sealed with red wax. He drew it out.

Strange that Kitty should have written to him and retained her own letter all these years. He turned it over and over. At any other time, he would not have dreamed of opening it. Now—He broke the seal.

TO MY LOVE: I begin this letter with that dear name, and I will end with it. It is only our love that matters. That is eternal. Beside it the hardest trials are only passing incidents. Our long absence is one of them. The heaviest sorrows are not more to be feared. My poor love, I wanted so to crown you with joy; instead, I must bow your heart with anguish.

If you have strength of mind enough, Heriot, lay this letter aside just for one brief minute, and pray to our Father for courage.

I shall not see you again, my own darling. I am very ill. There is a terrible fever raging here. Nurses were wanted, and I offered myself. I was seized a few hours ago. Your Kathleen will not see the dawn rise even once more. I prayed the doctor for a few minutes of strength that I might send you a loving good-by. He injected strychnine. I write hurriedly, trying not to be afraid. No one else shall break the news to you.

The first page ended there. Baxter did not turn it over. He was incapable of movement. A sudden war of extraordinary emotions stupefied him. He told himself that he was dreaming; and he exerted a mental effort to break from this vision of sleep. But he was

not dreaming. He was fully awake. He looked at his palm, into which he had driven his nails. He stared, dazed, bewildered, round the room, at the electric lights, at the ticking clock upon the mantelpiece.

The letter fell from his fingers. His brain swam, and for a moment—the most priceless in his life—he almost fainted. He fought off the wave of unconsciousness, staggered to where a bottle of water stood upon a dwarf bookcase, and forced himself to drink a glassful slowly.

He took up the letter, and turned to its concluding page.

I want to say so much. My poor boy, how can I comfort you? I will say "I love you! I love you!" My last thought is of you, my last prayer for my dearest. The memory of your face and voice goes with me into the dark. Perhaps I, too, may lean out from the gold bar of heaven, and wait—wait. Oh, my love!

The pen had dropped from the weak fingers at this point, and a long slur of ink ran down the page.

Baxter stared at this piteous smudge. He touched it with a forefinger, as if he expected to find it wet. Clearly he did not know what he was doing.

He folded the letter mechanically, and put it in the breast pocket of his dinner jacket. Beads of moisture were trickling down his forehead—a cold dew, which he wiped away listlessly. Ideas, impressions, incoherent conjectures tumbled over each other in his seething brain. He drummed with his finger tips upon the table before him.

Slowly from this chaos emerged certain recollections, remembrances of certain wonderings. He permitted them for half a minute. Then he walked out of the room.

He returned a moment later. He had left the light burning, and now he switched it off. He was extraordinarily calm. He descended the stairs, put on his coat and hat, and went out.

Tredegar reclosed the door.

Kitty, her face buried in a cushion at the head of the sofa, sobbed with a violence that threatened hysteria.

"I have won," murmured Tredegar; "but I can do nothing while she is in this condition."

He fixed his eyes, haggard and anxious, upon the clock. Then he pulled aside the window curtains, and looked down. The cab which he had engaged was waiting, all right. He formed a rapid calculation. At the most, he could afford a delay of ten more minutes. If it exceeded that they must miss the train; and that must not happen on any account. If this flight failed, at the last moment, when everything was ready, its possibility would not recur. He felt that with a sure instinct. There would be a reaction. The woman would kill herself; but yield to him she would not.

He allowed two of the precious minutes to pass.

"Kathleen, I must have an immediate answer. Will you come with me, or will you not?"

The sternness told. She sat up and looked at Tredegar.

"With you? Where?"

"Don't go over the same old ground. We are leaving for Liverpool by the night train. You will be very comfortable in a sleeping car. To-morrow we leave England. So long as I get you away from this country I shan't care. I'll take you where you wish afterward. But you must come now—at once. Wipe your eyes. The cab is waiting. We have not a minute to lose. If we miss the train, then the situation will—pardon my frankness—become somewhat perplexing for you."

"I shall go back to my husband."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, go. Tell him that your name is not Kathleen, but Mary. Tell him that you are not the girl he so passionately loved, but her sister. Tell him that you wronged—first, the dead, who intrusted her farewell message to your keeping; and, second, her lover, who for ten years you have deceived with a lie."

Every word struck, as he intended it should. She bent her head, holding her gloved hands before her white face.

"Oh, make a clean breast of it," went on Tredegar pitilessly. "Add that I

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knew you in Melbourne, and that I loved you there; that your rejection of me drove me from the country. Say that I met you here a few weeks ago for the first time after ten years. That the sight of you revived an insane passion which I believed to be dead, but which had slumbered like a fire. That when I discovered the game you had played, that you had kept back the news of your sister's death, and had married Baxter in her name—that I threatened to expose you unless you fled with me. Only, in justice to me, you might add that, in my heart of hearts, I doubt the absolute legality of your marriage, that I sincerely believe Baxter to be the kind of man who would hate you if he knew the truth, and that I mean our flight together to give him the opportunity of divorcing you."

The woman uttered a faint moan.

"You have omitted one thing," she said, in so low a tone that she might have been speaking to herself, to her accusing heart, as she had spoken to it many and many a time. "I loved him twenty years back when he loved Kitty. I did not come here to England to deceive him. I did not dream of such a wicked thing. But when he saw me, he made that terrible mistake, which ever since has been my joy and my terror. He did not doubt that I was Kitty herself. I was always like her, and any difference he instantly put down to the ten years of absence that had parted them. Before I could speak, before I could utter one word, he threw his arms round me; he held me to his heart; he rained his kisses on my face. And for one second I hesitated; for one moment I played with that deadly temptation. After that, how could I tell him? Each passing hour made the task more impossible. It was because I loved him so that I could not—I could not break his heart—and—and mine."

Her voice had risen with the last sentences. She called them out wildly, in an excess of agony.

Tredegar altered his manner. He dropped upon one knee, and looked up into her face with eyes in which his very real passion glowed and burned.

"But don't you see, Mary, that he must know, that he has got to be told? You cannot continue to act this life for always. Well, we will write to him and tell him; and the same letter shall give him the opportunity to free himself from a union which he is bound to hate you for. His affection—and what is it to mine?—will turn to loathing. Consider what his feelings must be toward you when he finds out. Oh, he will thrust you from him in horror and detestation. Do not wait for that. You dare not. Come with me. I am giving up everything for you. Have pity upon me, upon him, upon yourself! Quick—come!"

She rose unsteadily. Tredegar held her wrists, very gently. His longing to kiss her was almost insupportable, though he knew it would be fatal to his hope—just then. She turned aside her face, pale as death, the eyes red and swollen.

"Come!" whispered Tredegar. "The beginning is hard, but the end will be peace."

Twice she tried to speak, but she was choking. At last the words came, in a sharp cry of rending pain:

"He—he might forgive! Might love—might love me in spite of all!"

"Madness. A vain, impossible hope to think—"

He stopped as if a hand had struck him upon the mouth. The door had opened, and Baxter was standing upon the threshold. He came forward slowly, looking at his wife. Tredegar released his hold, and stepped back until the table stopped him.

"I heard everything," said Baxter. He shot a side glance at Tredegar. "A vain hope?" he echoed. "To a hound like you, perhaps."

"Heriot!"

His wife tried to breathe the word, but only a spasm of emotion passed over her quivering face.

"I heard everything. For the love you have for me, for the love I have for you, of course—of course I forgive you—Mary."

He held out his arms.

The SUBLIME RENUNCIATION

By
**Frank
Condor**

ONE day, when business was exceedingly dull in East Toledo, an Ohio Central train ran into the fawn-colored shed that served as a "daypo," or "deepo," according to which side of the river you lived on, and sixty-three inches of feminine pulchritude descended from the day coach in perturbation and a blue traveling suit. Name of the five feet three of contained female ornamentation, Elizabeth Palmer. Home town, Fostoria. Destination, Toledo. Object, the immediate assimilation of a job in a newspaper office at eight dollars a week.

It is no violation of confidence to state that, at the moment Miss Palmer bestowed herself upon Toledo and environs, she was as green as the last two ounces in a crème-de-menthe bottle; and, if she had been a man, you would have glanced inquiringly for the wisp of straw in her hair and the sartorial defects that come with garments bought at a flour-and-feed store. But Miss Palmer's verdancy was mental. She was as pretty as the furry girl in the sleigh on the cover of a Christmas magazine. Her clothes had a slight mid-Ohio air about them; but nothing to speak of in terms of disparagement.

She watched the Ohio Central train back out of the station, and a temporary mist came into her brown eyes.

"Good-by, Fostoria," she said, with a catch in her voice.

Then she placed her hand bag upon

a bench, and wept softly. The utter vastness and inconceivable cosmopolitanism of East Toledo to a girl who has just come from Fostoria is overwhelming and productive of melancholy.

A few bald facts before leaping three or four weeks ahead: Elizabeth was nineteen; her mother remained in Fostoria, and expected to receive small sums from daughter. Elizabeth had never been in love. She was a stenographer of the middling-to-fair, second-speed variety. She went to church every Sunday; she had an aunt in Toledo; she nurtured in secret the budding of an awe-inspiring ambition, and she hated blond men of all kinds.

Mr. Tangerman pulled the final sheet of a pool-room raid story out of his typewriter, and turned to the man at the next desk. Mr. Tangerman was the police reporter.

"Have you had a pike at the new divinity downstairs?" he inquired.

The marine man nodded.

"She's there, isn't she?"

"It doesn't hurt your eyes to look at her, if that's what you mean."

"Out-of-town girl?"

Howard nodded.

"Bucyrus or Fostoria, or somewhere," he said vaguely. "She's just stopped shying when a trolley car goes by; and, if you look at her, she blushes beautifully. You needn't buy her a book or invite her to dinner, because



she'll simply stare at you in round-eyed amazement, and burst into tears."

"I have no intention of addressing myself to the young lady," said Tangerman, with dignity. "I was simply speaking in an impersonal way, and wondering whether, at your age and in your doddering decay, you still had enough intelligence to notice the addition of a particularly charming—"

"Oh, shut up!" Howard interrupted, without passion. "You've probably bought her a bunch of American Beauties already. If you go maudmuling this newcomer, I hope you get stung."

Within a week, Hugh Tangerman was walking home from the office with the new stenographer, and lingering at the gate until Elizabeth's aunt looked out reprovingly from behind the curtains. He spoke to her of art, and life, and death, and hats, and eyes, and Chicago, and eternity, and Mrs. Leslie Carter; and she listened, first in awe, and then in admiration. Once, as an idiotic thought flitted through his intelligence, he said:

"Why don't you be an actress?"

Then he grinned inwardly. He pictured this shy, silent, unsophisticated little person carrying a trident over a group of papier-mâché rocks, or swimming in a tank with the handicap of a mermaid's tail. He could see her with the spot light upon her, trembling and frightened, unable to face the clamorous horde, and too weak to flee to the wings. His inward grin expanded.

"I would like to be an actress," Elizabeth said quietly. "I have often thought of it, but I never mentioned it."

Hugh was silent. He had expected a modest answer; and, instead, he had received one that bordered upon the verge of confidence. It was as though Elizabeth had replied: "And I know I could act."

"What made you think of that—or say it?" she continued, after a long pause, during which her companion smiled at her quizzically.

"Because," he returned, with surface solemnity, "ever since I have known you, it has been my unflinching opinion

that you are missing your vocation. There is something about you that instantly suggests the stage to the careful observer. All you need is the technical skill that comes with experience."

"Do you mean that?" Elizabeth asked, with a queer feeling in her throat and an enthusiasm in her eyes that should have warned Tangerman.

"Mean it! Of course I mean it," he continued, in a tone of simulated ardor that afterward brought him many a groan. "You have the fundamental qualifications down to the smallest details. You are exceedingly pretty. That's point number one, and it's a big one. You have an excellent voice. You have a wonderful personality, and you learn readily. Providing you are willing to study the drama seriously, there is no reason why you should not become a country-wide success."

"I wonder if it could be so?" she interrupted wistfully.

Hugh Tangerman warmed to the work in hand. He gazed into her eyes, and watched them dance with pleasure as he painted the picture—the future on the stage. He painted well. With the unrestrained imagination of an enthusiastic artist, he pictured the applause of future audiences, the obeisance of the press, the clamor of managers for the newly arisen star; the luxuries, mental and physical, that would come to her. Elizabeth listened with an intensity that should have given him pause, but he plunged into his madness; and, as he argued and explained, she saw his tracings as realities, and she believed them.

Remember that Elizabeth was from Fostoria. Remember that Elizabeth was young and buoyant. Remember that she had cherished the ambition of the stage in secret since, as a little girl, she had seen the bloodhounds gallop across the ice, and that for the first time she could talk to some one about her dream—that she could listen to one who was older and more experienced than she, and revel in his honeyed portraiture.

Tangerman was cruel about it. He lied deliberately, and at first as a blithe jest; and, when he saw that it pleased

Elizabeth, he entered gayly into the spirit of the game. He knew perfectly well that the little stenographer was no more adapted to become an actress than she was fitted to command an ocean liner or build a cathedral or captain a football team.

Out of Elizabeth's sight, he formed conspiracies with other reporters and men on the *Evening News*. One by one, under his urging, they spoke to her about the stage, bringing up the subject in an accidental way, and continuing it with personal application to the unsuspecting stenographer. The church editor noticed her wonderful resemblance to Eleanor Robson, and dilated upon Elizabeth's hidden qualifications. The telegraph man told her abruptly that she could make more money as an actress in a week than the typewriting business would bring her in a year.

Each man did his ignoble share, and enjoyed it. All of them took delight in talking to Elizabeth, no matter what the subject; and Hugh Tangerman held his sides and choked with laughter. It was a tremendous joke. She took the thing so seriously—it was unbelievable.

"If you ask me what I think," Howard growled, "I will inform you that you're a bunch of vultures preying upon a poor little country girl, who hasn't the discernment to sneer at you. The intelligent Tangerman is the worst, of course. You're putting notions into this baby's mind that she'll have a lot of trouble with, and you're probably storing up actual grief for her. Why don't you let her alone with her carbon sheets and stamped envelopes?"

"Because," Tangerman retorted, "she's getting some genuine joy out of life for the first time. In Fostoria, if she told anybody that she wanted to go on the stage, they would call a conclave of the churches, summon the fire department, ring the curfew, and incinerate her amid the shoutings of a virtuous and outraged community. Here in Toledo, we are doing our small part to make her happy; and, if your veins weren't flowing with lime juice and vinegar, you'd understand it. When I tell the girl she'd have Blanche Walsh

backed into the fire wall and Maxine Elliott begging for help, I can see the tears of joy in her eyes."

"And, of course," Howard interrupted, "you, in particular, little Hughie Tangerman, the cute police reporter, must be the one to make her happy."

"All of which is none of your business," Tangerman replied coldly, turning to his machine.

There came a warm spring afternoon, when the sap flowed in the trees and the half doors swung invitingly in the barroom entrances; when the open cars came out haltingly, and squeaked on their long-unused wheels; when the girls wandered along the streets in white waists and pumps, and the hurdy-gurdies oiled up their voices for the season; when the ice-cream fountains glistened under brand-new coats of polish, and young men stopped before the tailor-shop windows to gaze admiringly at the new two-piece suits, and the constant beating of carpets warned the tired business man away from his home.

Upon such a day, Hugh Tangerman, his arm linked through Elizabeth's, walked abroad amid the tender sprouts of new grass, and asked her if a little home for two wasn't better than a prosaic aunt and a hall bedroom?

"I have long suspected," he told her, "that I loved you. I am now certain of it, and you are hereby cordially invited, urged, and beseeched to become my wife forever and aye."

Elizabeth pressed his arm tenderly, and looked into his eyes; but there was gentle melancholy in her voice when she spoke.

"I love you, too, Hughie," she said very softly; "but I cannot marry you now. It is strange that you have selected this one day out of so many to tell me of your love. Perhaps—perhaps—"

"Perhaps what," he demanded. "If you love me, why can't you marry me?"

"I will tell you a secret. For many weeks I have been corresponding with a theatrical manager in New York City. I feared to tell you before because I might have failed. But I saved my money steadily, and in hope of the great

day—the great day when I might start upon my career; and this morning, this very morning, I received news. I am to go to New York at once. I am to go on the stage. While I am only starting, I feel that all will be well, and some day you will be proud and glad to know that you had a hand in starting me. I am going to resign my position on the *Evening News* to-morrow, and Monday I shall start for New York."

Mr. Tangerman listened like a man whose faculties have suddenly deserted him. He opened his lips, but for a moment no sound came forth. He sat down on a bench, limply, weakly, and gathered his wits by main strength.

"Do you mean—d-do you mean that you seriously accepted a job on the stage?" he muttered. "D-do you mean that you went so far as to act upon my advice—t-to think that I meant what I said to you about acting and a s-stage career!"

Elizabeth nodded gently.

"Of course, dear. You meant what you said, didn't you?"

"No!" he shouted fiercely—so fiercely that Elizabeth stepped back and surveyed him wonderingly. "I never meant a word of it. I did it to please you, never dreaming that you would—w-would do anything like this. You can't act, Elizabeth. Oh, listen to me, while I tell you the real truth."

"The other men told me I would make a good actress," she said simply.

"I put 'em up to it," Hugh thundered. "I thought it was partly a good joke and partly a pleasant thing for you to hear. You are no more qualified to act than you are to—be a polar bear or a parachute jumper, or anything else impossible. You're just a domestic, lovable little girl, without one whit of stage ability. You'll be frightened to death on the stage. You'll meet rough, uncouth, undesirable people. You'll run into bad companions, and have to listen to insults from bonehead managers and stage directors, who are nothing more than fiends in human form. Stay at home—stay at home," he beseeched, "and marry me."

A cold, threatening light glinted in

Elizabeth's eyes. Her lips pressed together in a thin line and a frown sat upon her brow.

"So you were only trying to make a fool of me," she said, laughing harshly. "You were 'stringing' the little country girl from Fostoria, who didn't know any better. When you told me that I was fitted for the stage, you were telling deliberate lies. And you enlisted the services of your obliging friends to help the jovial situation along. You must have had a fine time, laughing at me behind my back. But I'll show you, Hugh Tangerman. And I'll show the pack of brainless ninnies that work with you. I loved you ten minutes ago, but now I don't love you at all, and I think you're a beast for deceiving me—or trying to. I'm going home. Good-by."

"Listen, Bess," he pleaded. "Hear what I have to say. I'm older than you are—"

"And you haven't any sense yet," she scoffed. "Go away somewhere, and don't annoy me. Go and tell your reporter friends that little Elizabeth is going on the stage."

She swept by him, and departed. He followed miserably a step behind her, pouring forth explanations, regrets, protestations of undying love, the general conversation of a man who has received a mental mule kick of tremendous force. His words fell upon two shapely but deaf ears. They rode to her aunt's house in silence, and she bade him good-by curtly. He reached for her hand; but she refused him that mild consolation, and he wandered back to the office like a condemned murderer approaching his pre-hanging breakfast.

Mr. Howard, of the marine department, sat pasting together long strips of proof behind the largest paste pot in the world. He was alone in the local room when Tangerman entered, and he cast an inquiring eye toward the glum police reporter.

"Mother dead?" he asked amiably, as Tangerman banged the lid of his desk open.

"No," replied the other, but he failed to add a fitting insult to the exclamation, and Howard looked worried.

"What's wrong?"

"Everything in the world. I thought I was a clever young man. I thought I had sense and intellect, but I find that the inside of my head is composed of solid ivory, concrete, chilled steel, and mortar in equal parts. I'm in the worst mess it's possible to get into, and I did it all with my own little noodle."

"One of three things, I presume," Howard said. "Girl, woman, or a member of the opposite sex."

Tangerman nodded dismally.

"What is it?"

"Elizabeth Palmer is going on the stage."

"The ornamental and engaging stenographer in the business office."

"Yes; the lady I thought I was kidding so completely."

"Why do you care what she does?"

"No defined, precise, or exact reason beyond the fact that I have told her I loved her, asked her to marry me, and had her admit that she loves me."

Howard laid down his paste brush and whistled softly. The sarcastic twinkle in his eyes died out, and he stared at Tangerman thoughtfully.

"You mean," he said slowly, "that, owing to what you told her about the stage, and what you had Tully and Smith and the others tell her, she's actually got the bug, and means to do something?"

"She's going to New York Monday. My wanting her to marry me isn't going to make the slightest difference to her. Incidentally she now loathes and despises me because I confessed to her this afternoon that I had been telling her lies about her stage career. I was brutal enough to inform her that she and a cigar Indian are equally fitted to act."

"Didn't it occur to you during the merry-kidding stunt that this might be the result?"

"It did not. I never dreamed of such a thing. Besides that, I wasn't in love with her in the beginning."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to sit here and mope a while; and, after that, I'll go over to

the corner and buy a pound or two of cyanide."

"Do you remember my telling you that giving that little girl stage ambitions was likely to cause trouble?"

"Perfectly," replied Tangerman. "And if you think you are making me happy by reminding me of it, you are wrong. I'm as miserable as I can get without your soothing efforts. Think what it means to me."

"Can she act? Has she any possibility at all?"

"No, she can't act. She can't act any more than your grandmother or mine. Those vampires down in New York will be on her trail the minute she strikes town. She hasn't much money; and, when a stage manager sees her on the stage the first time, he'll fire her the minute he comes out of his faint. She can't get a job; and, if she did accidentally land one, she can't hold it. What's to become of her? I know New York, and so do you, and when Broadway sees her, there'll be an audible licking of chops from Forty-second Street to the Battery. It's frightful to think about."

"If you love her, and there's a chance for you to marry her eventually, why don't you head off the disasters you see ahead?"

Tangerman sat up, and looked at Howard steadily.

"You're making pretty good money here," the latter continued. "That shop of yours over on the Exchange turns in a dividend every now and then. Why not take the money and use it to help her?"

"Do you suppose for one blessed instant she'd let me help her after what has happened? Her pride is stung, I tell you. She's going to show this *News* outfit that she can't be joshed, and she's going to make me pay dearly for my share of the work."

"Scotty Ellis has the cable desk on the New York *Moon*, hasn't he? You and Scotty were bosom brothers when he was here. Ship the coin on to him with a letter. Tell him to see that one budding actress is to get a fair deal. He knows every burlesque, vaudeville, and

musical manager in town, and he can slip the money to the proper one in a plain brown envelope. In return for this consideration, the manager is either to give the girl a job, or, if she has one, to keep her on at a decent salary as long as he can avoid being publicly hanged for doing so. If you can keep on sending money East long enough, there is a chance that your goddess will get good and sick of the acting business, and come back to you. And, in the meantime, she needn't know anything about your financial relations with the managers. You had the fiddler dance, and now it looks as though it was up to you to pay—that is, if you care enough for the girl."

Tangerman arose, and took Howard's paste-covered hand.

"You're a brick, old fellow," he said. "I wouldn't have thought of that in ten thousand years."

"We all have our special qualifications," replied Howard gravely. "Your gift is kidding innocent country girls from Fostoria."

On the following day, Elizabeth Palmer severed her connection with the *Evening News*. Her hatred of Hugh had abated, and together they dined in the evening. During the dinner, he held himself to an attitude of melancholy acquiescence, a grieved acceptance of the blow Fate had dealt him; and, before the oysters were served, Elizabeth had partly forgiven him for the troubles of the past.

"How much money," he asked suddenly, "are you taking to New York?"

"Something over a hundred dollars," Elizabeth answered. "I'll have no trouble at all. I'll see the manager as soon as I can, and I'll begin to draw a salary within a week, or two weeks at the outside."

"Who is the manager?"

"His name is Mr. Weeks. I don't know what company I'll start with. I'm not overconfident. I expect to work hard, and to suffer inconveniences. Other girls have been successful, and I shall be successful."

"And our marriage," Hugh said dismally. "What of it?"

Elizabeth waved her glass vaguely.

"The future will take care of all things. Some day, when I am a great actress, we shall be married."

"And if I wait until you're a great actress," was his unspoken thought, "our marriage will undoubtedly become a member of the Mrs. Harris Club."

Thirty-six hours later, Hugh kissed Elizabeth farewell. She wept a little on his shoulder, and made a number of fervent promises speckled with "never forget," "always love," "write every day," and other similar sentiments that are old, weary stuff to the iron pillars in railway stations. Hugh went back to the Stock Exchange, and held a long conversation with the manager of a particular office in which he was financially interested.

For a year he had been investing money in the Exchange firm, realizing that the future of a newspaper reporter, who intends to be a reporter all his life, is covered with melancholy, unpaid board bills, and the pity of his fellow man. The investment had begun to pay him; and, adding the income to his weekly salary, he was in the neighborhood of sixty dollars every Saturday night. In Toledo, a man who makes sixty dollars a week is constantly open to suspicion, unless his ancestors were brewers.

He opened communication with Scotty Ellis; and that astounded young man pondered for an entire week before he could fathom the intent of the reporter. When he finally understood that he was secretly to pay money to theatrical managers in order to keep an incompetent actress employed, he indulged in a few cutting remarks about the gullibility of Western reporters; but he accepted the commission and Hugh's first check for a hundred dollars.

Mr. Weeks placed Elizabeth in a musical comedy, and gave her a salary of eighteen a week. At the end of the second week, Elizabeth was discharged; but, through the kind offices of Mr. Weeks, she was immediately reëngaged by another manager. Mr. Ellis figured in the transaction, but wholly as a silent partner.

When six months had passed, the aspiring actress had accumulated considerable experience. She passed from theater to theater, from musical comedy to burlesque, then back to musical comedy, into the drama and out of it. She met managers of all types; and they were pleasant and respectful to her in spite of the obvious fact that she was a very pretty young woman who could not act—who apparently could never fit into the chorus, or anywhere else in the theater except in a commonplace and commercial plush seat out in front. The constant flow of crisp green bills from Scotty Ellis accounted for this strange phenomenon; and, back in Toledo, Hugh Tangerman was working night and day on the upholding of a bank account that began to sag at both ends, the sides, and the middle.

In September, the reporter took a leave of absence. He had begun to long for the girl until his city editor noticed it, and his police stories began to read like something on the back of a New Year's blotter.

"Go away for a while," advised the boss.

"I will," Hugh replied.

Thereupon he seized a handful of the remaining bills, and climbed aboard a Pullman bound for New York.

Elizabeth had written to him steadily. Some of her letters made him angry, and over others he felt tempted to weep. Winning or losing, discharged or employed, her tone was one of constant optimism. She wrote:

These stories of the ill-treatment accorded girls by theatrical managers are all plain lies. I have been treated with never-failing respect by every one. The other girls often tell me tales of their experiences, some pleasant, some horrible, but I don't believe them. No manager has ever asked me to dinner. I have never been in an automobile unless I paid my own way. Nobody has offered me diamonds. Nothing whatever has happened to me except my work, and I have worked hard.

"Of course not," he reflected ruefully. "But something has happened to little Hughie's pile. The taut wire can stretch so far and then it bursts; and I'm a pretty taut wire just about now."

He stopped at Buffalo long enough to forward a telegram. He was coming to meet her, and that evening he was to have the pleasure of seeing her on the stage. The play was a musical comedy, or a comedy with music—the critics had been unable to decide which, and Elizabeth had a small part. If possible, she was to meet him at the station, and they would dine together before the performance of "The Silver Queen."

Immediately after the dispatching of that telegram came a series of incidents, each of which was highly important. A fast-moving freight train bound East came into violent collision with something or other, and sprawled across the right of way. The consequent delay fractured all of Tangerman's plans. Instead of arriving in New York late in the afternoon, it was impossible for him to reach the metropolis until eight in the evening.

The star of "The Silver Queen" slipped and broke her leg neatly in two places. The understudy of the star lay, at the moment, in a hospital with two physicians trying to ward off pneumonia, and the understudy to the understudy was mysteriously absent when the time rolled round for the curtain to ascend.

Stage manager, house manager, general manager, producer, chorus girls, sceneshifters, and miscellaneous persons galloped about the stage of the Rialto Theater in a state of high fever and excitement. Through the curtain peephole, one might have observed the presence of a cheerful and immense audience—an unsuspecting audience waiting to be amused.

There are two words in the English language that will unfailingly give a theatrical manager heart disease. They are "money back." With a two-thousand dollar house before his curtain, the manager of the production stood in the wings, his hands thrust into his pockets and the cold beads upon his forehead.

Elizabeth Palmer stepped up to him, and said quietly:

"I can play the leading part if you care to have me try it."

The manager stared at Elizabeth dumbly for a moment. Then he took

his hands from his pockets and began to talk rapidly.

Elizabeth had studied the part in secret. She was letter-perfect. Rapidly he put her through several tests. He talked at the rate of two hundred words a minute, and then dashed out to the front of the house, and returned an instant later.

"The Silver Queen" was ordered ahead, and Elizabeth Palmer stepped into the leading rôle.

At twenty minutes past eight, Hugh Tangerman appeared in the foyer of the Rialto, and at eight-thirty he was leaning against a pillar, and trying desperately to contain himself, keep the tears of rage out of his eyes, and avoid a murderous assault upon a theater full of strangers.

He saw the girl he loved, blinded by ambition, dumb to everything in the world except that she was playing the leading part. He saw an astounded audience that first sat in silent amazement, and then began to applaud. It was the dry, ironic, cruel applause, insistent and unanimous, that follows acting so terribly bad that no other punishment will fit it.

Two thousand human fiends waited in patience until the end of each speech, and rewarded the girl with delicate, precisely timed handclapping. There was nothing boisterous or rude in the crucifixion of the actress. No one shouted or booed. No one suggested the getting of the hook. The members of "The Silver Queen" grasped the situation in an instant—following Elizabeth's first speech—and they worked in harmony with the torturers out in front; and, through it all, Elizabeth went ahead calmly and confidently, totally ignorant of what was happening to her.

At the end of each act, the applause resembled the roar of Niagara. Not a soul left the theater. Never had a New York audience sat down to such a delicious treat. It was an event to be talked of in the years to come.

When the play ended, Elizabeth rushed to her dressing room, wild with excitement and flushed with triumph. She heeded no one. She talked to no

one. She was in the state of mental exaltation that borders closely upon intoxication; and twenty minutes later she stumbled from the stage entrance and fell into the arms of a pale-faced reporter from Toledo.

"I told you I could do it!" she gasped. Hugh wrapped her cloak closely about her shoulders; and she sobbed happily and in total disregard of the curious eyes about her.

He said nothing for a moment except, "There, there, there," as one soothes a restless infant. Then he bundled her into a taxicab, and told the chauffeur to drive about aimlessly until ordered to do otherwise.

"Were you in the theater all the time?" she asked.

"From the very beginning," he replied softly.

"You saw and heard everything?"

"Everything."

"Wasn't it grand? Wasn't it glorious? Is there anything like it in the world? You can't imagine how I felt."

"You can't imagine how I felt, either," he said quietly.

For a time she was silent. She leaned back luxuriously in the cushions, and watched the flying lights through the cab window. They had passed the downtown streets, and were far up in the park.

"Hugh."

Elizabeth placed her hand upon his, and her fingers closed over it.

"You asked me to marry you, and I said that some day I would. You treated me shamefully in the beginning with what you thought was a clever joke upon a not very clever girl. I have proved to you that your joke was no joke at all—that I could act. I have proved to you that I have the histrionic instinct, and to-night you beheld with your own eyes and heard with your own ears the approval of a metropolitan audience—the hardest, coldest audience in the world. My opportunity came suddenly—a great deal sooner than I had expected—and by another stroke of good fortune, you were there to witness and to share my triumph. Now I am content."

"What do you mean?" he asked, sitting up suddenly.

"I mean," she went on happily, "that I am satisfied. I have done what I started to do. I have achieved my triumph; and, at the very moment when my nerves are tingling and the applause is still throbbing in my ears, I renounce the whole thing. I give up the stage. I will never appear again, and I will marry you to-morrow."

A prosaic taxicab driver was startled by an iron hand that reached forward and clutched him by the shoulder.

"Turn around," exclaimed a hoarse voice. "Turn around at once and drive for Grand Central Station. There's a train West in twenty minutes, and, if you catch it, I'll give you ten dollars extra."

The cab shot south like a meteor.

"You're not going away to-night?" said Elizabeth, in amazement.

"We are," he retorted firmly. "We are going away to-night—now—immediately."

"But my clothes—my room—my rent."

"Let 'em go hang."

"And the criticisms in the morning newspapers," Elizabeth continued, pressing his arm pleadingly.

"They are part of the stage. You have renounced the whole business. Forget them. I wouldn't have you see them for the whole wide world."

"Grand Central, sir."

The chauffeur opened the door, and stood with his hand at his temple in a thoroughly respectful manner.



BECAUSE OF HER

WITH bare brown legs and faded gingham gown,

I saw her first—a lovely little girl.

Her slender fingers clasped within my own,

With low, sweet laughter, set my heart awhirl.

From out her wondrous eyes of darkest blue

Shone forth a soul all pure and undefiled,

And all things young and beautiful took on

An added charm because she was a child.

Again I saw her as a maiden grown,

A half-ope'd blossom, whose rare grace fulfilled

The promise of the bud, and yet gave hints

Of greater glories, when, if God so willed,

The half-blown rose should ope to fullest flower.

I brought my gifts of frankincense and myrrh,

To lay them at her feet; and evermore

I revered Womanhood, because of Her.

And now I watch her rocking to and fro,

And crooning low within the dimming light;

A tiny head is pillowed on her arm,

A tiny form is cuddled warm and tight,

A glow is on her face—a light, methinks,

That never on the land or sea did rest.

All Motherhood is sacred now to me

Because it is my baby at her breast.

MABEL STEVENS FREER.

THE FOURTH EDITOR

MARGARETTA TUTTLE



DAVIDSON folded up the manuscript with a slowness that indicated a degree of promise in it, and opened the letter, that had come with it, for a second reading. Into his office every day there were brought the manuscripts that had passed the outer guard of the readers and were ready for his decision. They were piled high on his desk; and, from their varying numbers, he selected sometimes one, and sometimes none at all. Once in a while, he dictated a personal letter, with regrets.

"Never plot and character and style together," said Davidson, skimming through the letter in his hand that asked to be given a reason for unavailability if either the reason or the unavailability should prove realities.

"She shall have a real one," said Davidson, pressing the buzzer that brought his stenographer. "Tell her," he dictated, "that the story is too long, that there is no reason for her dragging in the navy by the heels, and that the long-lost love theme was overused during the dull days in the ark. Yes, I mean it. Tell her all that, and finish up that her technique is good, and that as soon as her invention improves, we should like to see something else."

Then Davidson forgot even the woman's name until the following week, when he found in his mail a letter his secretary had not opened because it boldly bore the inscription "Personal." He read:

Mr. DAVIDSON, of *Gleeson's*: It is a pity that the gayety of nations must suffer by lack of the publication of your letter to me. Your condemnation was so comprehensive that it left me no defense save laughter.

Perhaps you will permit me to commend your courage, for of course you could not tell but what you might be irretrievably destroying budding genius—a thing, I believe, no editor wishes to take on his shoulders.

I have been doing some article work for the *Cosmos*, and I am coming to New York to confer with an editor or two it has interested. Will you accord me a fifteen-minute interview while I am there? For I have found that though men may be alike, editors are so different that unless one takes it into account one is apt to send the triangle story to the editor who demands parallel lines, and psychology to the editor who insists on battle, murder, and sudden death.

Tentatively yours,
KATHARINE NEELAN.

Davidson pressed the buzzer.

"Jim," he said, "get me a copy of the letter I wrote to Katharine Neelan last week. See, also, if it is Miss or Mrs. Neelan."

Davidson regarded his stenographer's paraphrasing of his dictation with an appreciative eye, and then set his brain delving for some memory of her story. The *Cosmos*, if not one of the best magazines in the country, was one of the most influential, and could afford to pay any price it chose for what it wanted. It was no part of Davidson's business to lose track of anybody who could write anything well. She might possibly write a better article than she did story. He handed the carbon copy back to the stenographer.

"Miss Neelan or Mrs.?" he said.

"Miss Neelan, of Cleveland."

"Write her to telephone the office when she comes," said Davidson.

A week intervened to drive the incident out of Davidson's mind, so that he had an instant's pause when her name reached him over the telephone.

"This is Mr. Davidson?" said a low voice, as he hesitated.

"Even so," said Davidson.

A little ripple of laughter swayed over the wire into Davidson's story-tired brain.

"Mr. Davidson, I am commanded by some member of your office force to telephone you the news of my arrival, and to ask you in person when I may see you."

Davidson's treacherous memory suddenly reacted to the demand made on it. He responded almost automatically to the laughter in the voice; for, after all, laughter in the face of criticism is rare.

"Miss Neelan," he said, "I have been waiting for you for five days. You are to come as soon as you can."

"I am just off the train. I will wait only long enough to wash my face, which will make it five days and fifteen minutes."

"Where are you staying?" said Davidson.

There was just the faintest hesitation; then, still with that infectious hint of laughter, the voice murmured: "At the Dolly Madison."

There came back over the wire a muffled answer that sounded suspiciously, as if it had been hushed by second thought.

"The reason?" inquired the voice from the Dolly Madison. "Is it not curious that one is so often called upon to give a reason for staying at a woman's hotel? I have two reasons. The first is that I wear bonnets; the second, that I am seven feet tall."

A good-by, half extinguished by the same ripple of laughter that had accompanied her first salutation of him, sped over the wire, and there was the click of a hung-up receiver. Davidson returned to his manuscripts, and his look was bored.

He was in the midst of discussing the next month's cover, when the girl who guarded the outer office brought him one of the printed slips on which callers wrote the name of the man they wanted to see. On this slip there was also printed the suggestive word "business," followed by a vacant line in which to state it. In this vacant line, Katharine Neelan had merely put a question mark. Davidson regarded it with interest.

"Ask her to wait a few minutes," he said. "I will ring as soon as I have finished this."

He dispatched the business of the next month's cover, and rang.

Katharine Neelan opened the door, hesitated, and, entering, closed it, still facing him; and then Davidson chuckled; for he had looked for her face far up the door, and she was slight, and small, and girlish. On her head, in lieu of the threatened bonnet, was a brown fur toque almost the color of her hair; a toque caught, as only Paris or a very clever woman can do it, with a splash of gray-blue velvet and a gray-blue drooping feather, that curled down among the waves of hair over her ear. Aided by the blue feather and the blue of her coat or frock, or whatever it was she wore, Davidson saw that her eyes were the same color. Her hand released the doorknob, and took shelter in a brown fur muff. Davidson offered her the chair before his desk.

"I was not sure of the bonnet," he said; "but I did expect a woman who had to sleep on the bias."

"What, from the Dolly Madison!" she answered. "They wouldn't let you! But New York is such a tonic to me that I do not need sleep or food when I am in it. Its Zeit-Gheist suffices."

In the young voice there was such magnetism of enthusiasm that Davidson forgot that he was too busy for personalities; he merely looked at the fringe of excited color creeping up her cheek as she sat facing the light, resentful over his own waning youth, and ready to give her such attention as her very appreciable appeal commanded.

She responded at once to his waiting attitude.

"Mr. Davidson," she said, "I have come to you solely for advice. I will acknowledge the presumption at once—basing it only on your ability and my assurance and my need. All my life I have written stories—since my first school days of a lead pencil and fairy tales. I could no more help it than I could help breathing—you understand how it is—there is scribbling blood in me, far back on both sides.

"Even if I said to myself that I could not write, I should have to go on doing it, so I do not say so. I say that, so far, it has been second class; but that any moment I may pass the rather subtle line between first and second-class work; and that, when I do, I do not want anything at the selling end of my business"—she laughed a little catching ripple of laughter—"to hold me back. I have come on to New York especially to examine the selling end; to find out, if I can, just what my buyer wants for his individual market."

She paused, and brought her eyes back from the window to those of the man quietly watching her.

Davidson's critical insight earned him a competence; but its very perspicuity kept him from being content with the world of women trained to the lure of surface attractiveness. He admitted that elaborate appearances, and even intellectual pretenses, were so useful to a woman as to be a necessity, that a success to be won only by the indirect method of influence did not tend to develop honesty and courage; but some day Davidson hoped to find a woman who had courage without loss of womanliness, who substituted brains for pretty complaisances, who was kindly.

He caught himself up with a jerk, conscious that the girl had long since ceased to speak, and that his mind, busy over its purely personal problem, had neglected his guest. Then he had a sharp sense of two things; that she was looking at him with uncanny understanding, and that it had been her vivid face and personality that had sent his mind on this sudden journey.

"I was wondering," said Davidson, with prompt evasion, "just what I could say to you. I can tell you that, on the discovery of the new writer, the success of the editor depends; but I can also tell you that, if he had a million dollars to spend on every edition of his magazine, he could not guarantee that it would have two really strong stories in each number."

"Will you also tell me what you consider the necessary elements of a good short story?"

Davidson smiled.

"There are books by the score that will answer that question for you. If you should chance to be able to use English with effect, if you understand how a short story should be built, and then if you can add to this real human interest, no editor will ask more of you. Indeed, you can then ask anything you choose of him. My especial magazine wants love stories, problem stories, if the problems are objective. We cannot use much introspection, and we are not at all interested in people's souls. It is rather a pleasure to us if the story people will get out and do something rather than think lengthy thoughts. You will find many of the other editors agree with me in this. Whom are you going to see?"

"Four men—all editors of widely different magazines. First, Mr. Boland, of the *Reaper*."

"You will find him critical and coolly appraising, but interested in new writers. Your success will depend absolutely on the work you do for him, not for any other publisher. You will have to make good. His magazine has a reputation that attracts the best writers of the country—you compete with them."

The girl apparently recorded this in her mind, and went on to the next man, the editor of the *Era*.

Davidson smiled, and leaned toward her.

"Has he had anything from you?"

"Yes—an article. I hope to make it one of a series, but he has not yet accepted this one. I am to confer with him about it to-morrow."

Davidson had found it as impossible

to consider Miss Neelan's attire as it is to look at the frame of a striking picture; but now he gave her furs and her broadcloth a lightning glance of appraisal. They did not betray that they were all that was left of lost days of plenty, so he hazarded a question.

"I judge that you are not needing money for your work at once?"

She hesitated ever so slightly.

"I can afford to wait," she answered.

"Well, this man has behind him a good deal of money accumulated by his newspaper. I'd like to see you stick him. How fast do you work? How many articles can you write for him?"

Her eyes lightened. Davidson knew the look; she loved the work.

"Any number," she said.

"No, no, be practical. How many, say, on the subject of your first one?"

"Four."

"Well, you keep your price high, and raise it if he wants to syndicate them. Be sure the book rights revert to you, and don't say that you had an article in such and such a number of the *Cosmos*. Just tell him that, of course, he has seen your work, and let him hunt it up for himself."

Katharine Neelan had the appearance of drinking this in. Davidson, unlike her, did not look out of the window as he talked. He looked at her. Then at the eager wistfulness of her face and the recollection of her revealing moment's hesitation when he had asked her if she needed money for her work at once, the man chuckled softly:

"I'd like to see you stick him," he said.

The girl's eyes bore the look of one who gazes on the promised land shining far off from the mountainside to which she had been led. And Davidson, catching the look, suddenly fell heavy-hearted. How brief it was this youth in which all things seemed possible, how he himself had once longed to spend his hours with winged words and dear imaginings, how hard it had been to take the measure of his own ability—critical and not creative!

Davidson caught himself up again to find the girl's blue eyes returned

from the horizon of promise, and resting on him with another of those uncannily understanding looks.

"Irish, are you not?" he asked.

She nodded, and he knew where she had caught the little rippling laugh.

"'Tis the gift of gab that gives me no rest," she said, in the lightest of brogues.

"Sure," said Davidson. "And who is your third editor?"

"Mr. Evans, of *Halleck's*."

"He is an old hand at this game, and has long ago given up hope. He does not trust any man or woman who writes. You might as well just send him your manuscripts, and not bother with an interview."

"No, no. It is a hundred times easier to write for a magazine when you can keep in mind the kind of man who governs its taste."

"In one interview can you discover the kind?" he asked.

She smiled subtly, and Davidson had a sudden vision of himself, hurried and practical, having spent a half hour in advice. He looked at her more closely. He knew a few men who were almost clairvoyant when it came to the appreciation of character. But he had never encountered it in a woman. Even as he pondered the matter she rose.

"For the fourth editor," she said gravely, "I do not need your help."

He had an instant's curbed curiosity, followed by an uneasy sense that she might now burden him with thanks. But she did not.

She moved to the door.

"Good-by, Mr. Davidson."

He suddenly found himself anxious. It took the form of assurance.

"I shall be interested in how you come out—and if you stick the *Cosmos*. You will let me know?"

"Yes. You shall hear of my adventures." Her hand was on the knob.

"And the fourth editor?" said Davidson.

She spoke over her shoulder.

"He is tall, with clever eyes, and a chin that has a cleft in it. He is said to be the most versatile editor in New York, and the best hearted. He has

about him an air that minimizes difficulty. It is an inspiration in itself—and—he can laugh well."

"Who on earth is he?" said Davidson, with a sudden queer sense of distaste that, had he ever known the feeling before, he might have called jealous.

"His name?" she queried lightly. "His name is Davidson."

The door closed her out of his sight.

The manuscripts for the next few days were unusually dull. Almost certainly, until one sickened over it, there confronted Davidson the girl in deadly peril, and the man saving her from it. Sometimes it was a psychological peril, sometimes it was a physical one, now and then it was moral; but, whatever its kind, it was never danger, it was peril; and there was never a policeman or an elderly female to render assistance, but always a young and handsome man. It seemed foolish for anybody to lose anything, high up in this great publishing office, where tons of typewritten pages related the fortunate findings at critical moments of all lost things, from reputations to loves of youth. Plutocrats grew so thick that Davidson began to throw aside every story that began with a man who had more than a million; and presently he began to lose patience with accidents. Then he knew that the written word was getting on his nerves, and he backed away from his desk and flung down its top.

A pervading and dispiriting drizzle greeted him as he emerged from his office building. Its damp crept into his blood, and set him to thinking of every evil thing that had ever happened to him. The high-walled city, dank with mist, had a threatening attitude of sullen loneliness that sent one to visions of home and firelight for relief.

Davidson found himself counting up the years it had been since he had had anything that could be remotely considered a home. He turned down Twenty-third Street to Madison Avenue, and hesitated a moment. If the city in which he held his own struck him into loneliness on an afternoon like

this, what would it do to the stranger within its gates who had, perhaps, inner reasons for depression to add to the outer ones.

"Just a little more experience, a little more seeing of things as they really are, as some man could show them to her, and that girl could make a good living—a story every little while, well placed and—"

Davidson crossed the street, and set foot on Madison Avenue with deliberation.

"I do not recall," he said to himself, "that I ever saw even the outside of the Dolly Madison."

At the end of the sixth square, he paused on the corner. A few doors off the avenue, a tall, yellow building ran a slim length through the square. Davidson stood still, and looked at the white sign far up at the top of the expanse of yellow brick; and, as he did so, a slight figure in blue, that had come more slowly up Madison Avenue than he had, paused and looked at him.

The girl in blue had moved behind him, square after square, as if burdened with an almost intolerable fatigue. There was a dispirited droop to her shoulders, and the light in her blue eyes seemed burning low, taking from her face some of that high courage that gave it distinction. But, as she neared Davidson, standing tall and solid on the corner, something gallant suddenly flung its spirit into her drooping figure. The small chin lifted itself, and the citadels of life, as at a sudden call, gave up a little remnant of their vitality to lighten the eyes and redden the whitening lips.

A little ripple of laughter, faint but very catching, fell athwart Davidson's depression.

"They ask a good price for it," she said behind him.

He turned, and swept off his hat.

"You might almost call this giving fate a chance," he said.

"Unless you happened to believe in providence," she answered. "Were you coming to tea with Dolly and me?"

"You and Dolly? I should like tea with you; but I am afraid of Dolly—perhaps even of tea. But you—will you

not take tea with me? My club is two short squares farther on; and there is a drawing-room, where a man may only have tea served when he has a lady with him—and not many of our men drink tea. Or there is the Hapsburg four squares away. You know I am to hear of your adventures."

She nodded.

"Yes, a guide-and-philosopher effect."

"Did you leave out the friend purposely?"

"Ah, I have no friends in this tragic big city—not many anywhere. I choose your club."

She kept out of her voice the weariness that could not force itself to more than two squares.

They crossed the street; and he took her arm, the better to hold his umbrella over her.

"Are you here alone?" he asked.

"Yes. Here and other places. And you?"

"I am not married, if that is what you mean," he said.

"New York, when one is alone, is the loneliest spot in the world, I think." She filled in, on the silence that followed: "It is so big and so careless; one person is just nothing at all. What an awful city to go under in! It is no wonder they defy success here."

The man caught, in spite of her effort to eliminate it, the discouraged undertone in her voice that had not been there in their first interview when she had likened the Zeit-Ggeist to food and sleep; and he looked down at her under his umbrella, catching in an unguarded moment the droop of the shoulders and the drawn look round the eyes.

"She has not stuck the *Era*," he said to himself. "Pity our bunch will not take articles."

The rain and the nearness of the dinner hour combined to render the woman's drawing-room of his club entirely empty. A log fire smoldered in the grate, and Davidson drew up a chair for her there, and ordered the tea, with a hesitant look at the pallor on her face, and the circles under her eyes.

"Tell me," he said, drawing his chair up to hers, "about the editors."

She paused.

"The truth?" she said finally.

"Oh, please," said Davidson. "Or, rather, if you like."

"They are," she said slowly, and he wondered what made speech difficult to her, "the kindest people in the world—the editors. Yet, for all that, your brief description of them had put an edge on my courage. I set out for the *Era* the morning after I saw you with real panic. It is not an easy place to find. I think I walked up the crookedest streets in the world outside of Boston; and I nearly had a following, so unusual did it seem to see a woman there. You know, the *Era* is published in the same building as *The Yellow Journal*, and I had to reach its editorial rooms through the *Journal's*. I had some little trouble making them believe I was expected, and—well, I hadn't had any breakfast. I was much too excited to eat, and I went up a circular staircase that made me quite dizzy, and the office was very close. So when the editor—it was, of course, the associate editor that I saw—wanted a story containing the ideas of the article I had sent him, and not articles, I am afraid I just sat in a heap and looked at him. It was, you know, quite delicious that I should have come to him to talk book rights and syndication only to find that he did not want articles; but it was too close in the office for me to see the funny side of it then; and, when he said that perhaps they could use that article if I could condense it and did not mind their editing it, I could not pluck up the courage of your admonitions. But I should not call that a success, should you?"

"I think I should," said Davidson, "though I have not seen the article."

"The second editor was Mr. Evans, of *Halleck's*; the one you had profanely called a wary old bird. The moment he came into the reception room where I was taken for my interview, I realized what you meant. He was absolutely expressionless. I might have been a block of wood. There seemed to be no way of approaching him personally."

She sighed slightly; and he noticed that even her talk did not now bring animation to her face.

"The third editor held for me the most coveted gift," she said. "He edits the best magazine in the world. When I set my feet on the lowest rung of the ladder—the five-dollar newspaper story—way up at the top I saw this magazine, the one where I wanted to be finally. No other one would do, not even your magazine, most august fourth editor."

She paused, catching a labored little breath.

"You found him—pleasant?" said Davidson, with a queer little, angry feeling he had never had before.

"I found him what you said he would be—absolutely impersonal; but I found him courteous—what shall I say? If it were a woman I should say delightfully bred; but it seems so superfluous to accent this quality of the gentleman in him. I found him tremendously interesting, even in my very brief talk with him, keen and brilliant—and—he will take the story I sent him a few days before I came."

Even with that queer little feeling that he had never had before buzzing in his brain at her praise of the other man, Davidson had room for pleasure in her news.

"Why, then—why, then—your trouble has been worth while. Why do you look so—so—"

He paused, uncertain how she looked. Then the waiter entered, put the tea tray on a table at their side, and departed. The aroma of steaming tea lent the air a pleasing tang. Davidson turned to ask her if she would pour it, and then sat stupidly staring at her.

For very quietly her head had fallen on one side of the chair, and the eyes were closed in a face ashen gray. The little figure lay huddled in the chair as if it had been thrown there by some gigantic power beyond even its gallant strength to resist.

Davidson had seen men faint, but never a woman. He sat dumbly an instant; then he sprang up, and, with a speed one would not have expected of

his tall figure, he moved down the corridor to the men's smoking room.

"Where is Doctor Gardiner?" he called to the first bell boy he met. "Does Doctor Gardiner happen to be here?"

"Yes, sir; there in the bow window."

Davidson laid a suddenly nervous hand on the doctor's shoulder.

"Gardiner," he said, "will you come over to the ladies' drawing-room? I—I was having tea there with a lady—with Miss Neelan—and she has fainted."

The two men covered the distance between the smoking room and the drawing-room in an incredibly short space of time. The little figure still lay huddled in the big chair, where Davidson had left it; the tea table drawn up beside the chair still bore its cozy, steaming tea kettle.

Davidson lifted the table aside, while Gardiner took off the girl's hat and laid her flat on a couch, his bright, dark eyes searching the white face. He lifted the ringless hand, and looked at it; then he looked up at Davidson curiously.

"What is it?" said Davidson hurriedly.

"Plain hunger, I think," said Gardiner briefly. "Where does she live?"

"She is here from Cleveland, staying at a hotel."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Better call an ambulance, then. It will be a hospital case."

Davidson stood transfixed.

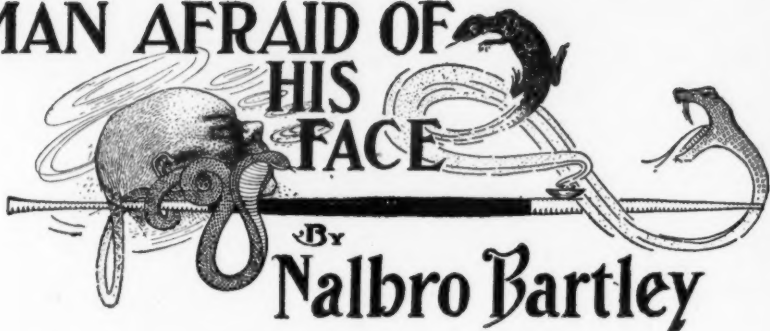
"Gad, man," Gardiner broke out irritably, "you might have seen she had not had much to eat for days, the moment you looked at her. Tea—don't you know starvation when you see it? Do you let your friends go hungry? Or is she a friend of yours?"

Davidson turned to the telephone.

"Yes," he said gravely. "Yes, she is a friend of mine."

He gave Gardiner an angry look, and his voice suddenly flared into a deeper key. "She is so great a friend of mine that I want to marry her," he said, "if she will have me. Get her out of this, Gardiner—and, if she will let me, I will see to it that she is never hungry again."

MAN AFRAID OF HIS FACE



By
Nalbro Bartley

MAN-AFRAID-OF-HIS-FACE sounds like stirring Indian tableaux given for the benefit of the child wives of India. It suggests curtain-fringe costumes, an unusual amount of red grease paint, and harmless carving knives sharpened to a critical point. But it is really the simple story of an American boy in the Philippine Islands, who gained the title at college when the psychology professor lectured on the tendency of man to save the appearances of an awkward situation rather than wound his pride in upholding the ethical side of the matter.

As the professor expressed it: "Many men will do what their better natures revolt against to——" Here he lapsed off into a helpless stream of ers and ahs, trying to find a forcible phrasing of the matter. Suddenly he burst forth: "Many men will do what their better natures revolt against in order to save their own faces." Which slang phrase made the matter clear to the junior class, particularly those who glibly promised subscriptions to social affairs, and were loath to draw out even though it meant painful economy in more practical matters.

The professor had rambled on at great length classifying lies—chivalrous lies told to save a weaker person, malicious lies with an intent to injure, foolish lies with a bragging motive, premeditated lies which gained an important issue. He also informed them that

man's soul was dual. When one-half of it took a punishment for some one else, the other half was roused to revenge; and usually the person ended up by committing fully as criminal an act as the one to which he had falsely confessed.

This last was a pet theory of the professor's, and for long years he had hurled it relentlessly at the sprawly juniors, who chewed their pencil ends and looked out of the windows with a bored expression.

The class made languid notes of the lecture, and secretly voted that a man who would go to jail for another man was decidedly lacking in gray matter. They romped out to football practice, and forgot all about it until Jim White, the six-foot half back from Vermont, said with his peculiar drawl:

"I'm sorry you fellows rushed me for the frat. Can't afford it."

Young Withers, whose father spent his spare moments writing checks for his son's extra tutors, answered:

"Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face? So you won't save the situation, will you? You let us rush ahead and break you in for the best frat in college. Then you curl up your toes and won't play."

To which White said nothing, while the rest of the crowd dubbed him Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face, and secretly admired his courage in admitting the truth. Women have a mistaken idea that they are the only ones who suffer if their vanity is not pampered. A

man's ridicule of his own sex is quite as stinging and uncomfortable. Through the remaining two years of "grubbing" for his degree, White never lost that hot flash of shame when they would hail him as Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face, and point him out as a painfully truthful person, who defied the laws of a naturally naughty soul, and refused to spend more than his income.

Eight years later, a bronzed, thin individual sat outside of the comandancia at Dugamini, Leyte, Philippine Islands, planning a tea party for the benefit of Jingles, aged eight, son of Scout Major Robert Fleming. Jingles' mother was inside with one of her bad head attacks; and, partly to keep Jingles from dancing native fandangos outside her door, and partly to pass away the hot hours, White had proposed the affair.

"We'll make it a regular Yankee menu," he said gravely. "I'll send to Manila, and see if they have chocolate creams in tins. We can have Spanish bonbons; and, if the gods are good and your mother doesn't look up child-hygiene laws, I'll promise you lobster salad and chocolate."

"Bully!" replied Jingles quickly. "You don't think I'm too old for a tea party? Now, who'll we ask?"

"The whole post," said White generously; "seeing there are no infantile spirits about."

"And Bimbi?" persisted Jingles.

White frowned.

"Bimbi has an annoying habit of tearing off table decorations and galloping away with them," he objected.

"We can't leave him out," said Jingles stubbornly. "If he is good enough to play with on ordinary days, he is plenty good enough to play with at a tea party."

Which democratic American view was beyond dispute; so White surrendered and extended an invitation to Bimbi, the pet monkey. Then Lieutenant Caldwell dropped outside, fresh from his noonday nap, and was taken into the secret.

"I call it rip snorting," he exclaimed enthusiastically. "We haven't had a

party in so long we won't know how to act. White, you're getting to be a terror on wooden wheels."

"He's going to be my uncle," added Jingles naively. "So it's all right for him to give me tea parties."

Caldwell joined in White's laugh.

"Who says children don't change if they live with grown-ups?" he continued, as Jingles slid from White's lap and pursued Bimbi across the green lawn. "Really, the little codger has the ideas of a graybeard. I hate to see it."

"What can we do?" asked White reflectively. "It isn't Jingles I worry about. This will all adjust itself when he gets into a good American school. It's his mother that worries me. Cald, don't you see her slip day by day? Doesn't Rob see it?"

"No; I don't think he dreams of it. Being a scout officer, he's away two-thirds of the time. When he's here, he's half dead from the tramps. All he thinks about is the material comfort of having Alice and Jingles. If he didn't have them to look forward to, I think we'd find Rob missing some day when we were expecting him home."

White crossed his long legs reflectively.

"Very true," he admitted. "But, on the other hand, some day Rob is coming home to find only Jingles."

Caldwell started.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

"I mean that Alice Fleming is dying by inches. I've written to her sister Edith telling her so. Rather than bring Edith out here, I'll put off our marriage five years. And I can remember when I believed that Edith could come out here as well as not."

Both men were silent a moment thinking of the timid, faded little lady who, year by year, drooped pathetically under the savage attacks of the tropical climate. Both knew she stayed doggedly at the post, refusing the chance even to go to Manila because her husband needed her, and because his staying in the province meant a greater promotion than ordinary service at Manila could ever mean. "Just a little longer"

had been her slogan for six years. And she shut her eyes to Jingles' growing, precocious mannerisms, his nervous, twitchy gestures, his abnormally matured opinions—all because the man she loved needed to see her face and hear her voice when he came back after weeks of searching through the hills for native criminals.

Like the early pioneer women of the West, she made the sacrifice voluntarily, and no one questioned her wisdom. It was merely one more woman lost in the making of American citizens.

"A woman, a white woman, trying to live in a God-forsaken army post is like a sensitive violin exposed to the hill rains," said Caldwell gravely. "By degrees, every string snaps, every key is rattling and useless. The entire instrument is so jarred that only a master musician can restore it, and coax it to play minor melodies with a persistent tragic tone of its past abuse."

"But what American woman will admit that?" asked White. "They are furious if you dare mention such a theory. It usually starts with the complexions, you know. They fight like wild cats if you hint at wrinkles or sallow skins. By the time you've led up to a change in disposition, they're ready to order a court martial without hearing evidence."

"But it's true." Caldwell watched Jingles, who was playing with Bimbi, and shook his head. "It's true. Thank God, you won't bring this woman's sister out to a life like this. That kid ought to be in an American city, with regular lessons, regular bedtime, normal play. He'll be ruined in another year."

"What can we do about it?"

"Nothing except pray that they'll both hold out long enough for Robert Fleming to open his eyes and trot 'em back to New York State. The tea-party idea is a good one."

Just then Jingles' mother came out on the steps.

"Is Jingles playing in this heat?" she asked anxiously.

"I think he's teaching Bimbi to pantomime 'The Breaking Waves Dashed

High,'" laughed White, both men rising. "Shall I corral him?"

"Please. He must come in and be washed."

She waited anxiously, while White dashed around the corner in search of his victim. Caldwell looked at her closely. Something in the dead whiteness around her eyes and the peculiar blackish look of the mouth gave him an unpleasant thought. But he dismissed the suspicion with a cutting abuse directed toward himself, and told her about the coming tea party.

"Jim is so good to him," she said pathetically. "He really teaches Jingles all he would learn at a school—and we must stop calling him Jingles. His father never realizes that he is not a baby. It's bad for him to be so spoiled."

Jingles appeared in sections, his future uncle patiently pushing him forward, Jingles retreating backward like a disappointed goat in persistent search of a fresh sheet of paper.

"Here he is," sang out White. "Half of his blouse is back with Bimbi. I didn't wait for it to be released."

"I hate being washed," announced Jingles tragically. "Ralafez and Dumez both rub the wrong way."

"You must be a tubby boy, or there will be no tea party," prophesied White savagely, at which Jingles made a hasty exit into the comandancia, followed by a grateful mother.

"Did you notice her face?" demanded Caldwell presently.

White paced up and down, forgetful of the sun.

"I did," he answered briefly. "But I won't think—that."

"No; not even if it were so. Sometimes a fellow can't let himself think."

The supplies for the tea party arrived from Manila in due time. The half dozen officers at the post, the village presidente, the padre were all invited. Jingles, dressed in his miniature soldier suit, rode through the barrio on his own pony, accompanied by the faithful and long-suffering Dumez. He insisted on delivering his invitation by way of tongue, using the native dialect, to the

intense delight of Caldwell and his mother's distress. The date was set for a time when Fleming would be back from the hills, and could sit at his son's right hand, and pass the treasured American chocolate creams.

By degrees, the post worked themselves up to a state of enthusiasm over the affair. Because, like all other persons, they had to have something to take an interest in, they looked forward to the occasion with the natural anticipation of any eight-year-old. They engaged the school children to sing patriotic songs at half past five, promising them a sugar fight afterward; and Caldwell boldly demanded the padre's band to serenade them during the tea party.

Jingles, in a state of perpetual impatience, had wormed himself into a stiff white suit, and sat expectantly on the comandancia steps to catch the first glimpse of his father. If he was not there by four o'clock, the party would be obliged to begin, White had told him.

Caldwell laughingly said: "We'll have his place ready, Jingles; and, if he doesn't come, we'll wait for the unbidden guest."

The one marring feature of the day was Dumez's breaking his leg and being taken to the hospital. Hard luck for Dumez, and a personal grievance for every member of the post. The *muchacho's* wife, Ralafez, wept bitterly when Jingles tried to comfort her, and confided to him that to-day was the time for the grass cutting of their ancestors' graves—a day most sacred to the Filipino. Jingles assured her that the grass could not grow very long in a single day; and, as soon as his social obligations were ended, he would go in person and see that the matter was attended to. At which Ralafez told him very forcibly that no one must cut the graves except Dumez—one must ten to one's family oneself.

At two minutes of four, a white cloud of dust told the post that some one was coming in a hurry. Five minutes later, Stanton, a civilian secret-service inspector, dashed into the courtyard, and said he must see Lieutenant Caldwell alone.

Now, all civilians have one unpleasant characteristic which they cannot help, and which should not be held up against them. But the characteristic still remains an unpleasant fact, and every military man feels it his duty to try to suppress it as far as possible. Which is: If a civilian can in any way put one over on a military man, he feels that life is not a hollow sham, and he doesn't care whether his town paper gives him a long obituary notice or not. If he can only humiliate the brazen brass buttons and swaggering uniformed persons, he has served his purpose. And with an equal degree of antipathy, military men band together to crush mere civilians, and relegate them to their proper place in the scheme of things.

The greeting between Caldwell and Stanton was not overly cordial. But Caldwell was bound to admit that Stanton was a good service man, and seldom came without cause. So he postponed Jingles' party enough to hear the news.

They went inside, and closed the door cautiously. Then Stanton burst forth:

"Caldy, I hate to do this—especially when a kid's going to have a party. But there's opium being smuggled in this post. Wait a minute. Don't explode yet. I've watched almost six months before I said a word or did anything definite. Then I put my best men to watch the Chinese shopkeepers. They're brothers, aren't they, up on the hill? Caldly, every inch, every grain of their merchandise has been examined. And they're not in the deal. And it's not a natives' league, either. It's single-handed. It's a white person's work. It's a woman's!"

"You mean?" Caldwell's lips shook. It was a shock to hear his own secret belief so brutally voiced.

"Mrs. Robert Fleming."

Stanton wheeled about, and began pacing up and down.

"You are entirely mistaken," said Caldwell, after a brief pause.

"Oh, no, Caldly, be square. You can't hide a woman's weakness every time. The stuff has come in packages of spices and teas, and Heaven knows

what all, from China. Tramp steamers have brought it down. Hasn't Mrs. Fleming received a good many packages?"

"Yes," Caldwell admitted, with a sinking heart.

There flashed across his consciousness her tired, jaded face, the weary, unnatural eyes, the blue, trembling mouth; and he knew that Stanton spoke the truth.

"Well, what are you going to do? How about it?"

"Listen, Stanton. Jingles—her kid—is having the tea party. White planned it. White's my subaltern. He's engaged to Mrs. Fleming's sister back home. Understand? Will you wait until the kid has had his party? It'll only be a little while, and then you can go ahead. I suppose you'll search?"

"I can't tell," said Stanton slowly. "I may do something very different. I hope you understand that I'm not gone on humiliating any woman."

"My God, it'll mean——"

"The blackest disgrace that a woman can have. By the way, does she smoke it?"

"On my word of honor, there has never been a trace of the stuff around here." Caldwell spoke solemnly, and Stanton knew he could believe.

"Then she's a step lower down than we thought. The cattle that eat it are—vile."

Outside, came Jingles' voice proclaiming the lateness of the hour. White soothed him with a gymnastic tussle; and his mother proposed that he save some of the candy to take to Dumez.

"Secret service isn't the pleasantest thing in the world," stammered Stanton.

"Come on—let's open fire."

Caldwell threw back the door with a flourish.

Stanton caught his arm.

"Old man, this can't help but cut you up raw. You've had the cleanest record for your post that——"

"Do you know a toast?" interrupted Caldwell coldly. "Jingles says no one

can come unless they'll recite something afterward."

"I think—I can," faltered the inspector, falling into line.

Mrs. Fleming met them with a wistful, appealing look that drove a dull red color into both their faces. Caldwell looked at White briefly; and White, who knew that Stanton never darkened military posts unless something had broken loose, longed to see Caldwell alone for half a minute.

The rest of the guests chatted freely, unconscious of the restraint. Little Mrs. Fleming toyed with her food, avoiding Stanton's searching gaze. Jingles, supremely happy, sat at the head of the table, a paper cap on his curly head, a veritable kingdom of sweets surrounding his place.

"You're the unbidden guest," he said frankly to Stanton, as the latter dropped into place.

Caldwell gave a queer chuckle.

"Jingles——" began his mother feebly.

"What brings you down to the place, anyhow?" demanded a young officer boldly.

Stanton hesitated a moment. Then he said quietly:

"There is some one smuggling opium at this post."

Every knife and fork dropped with a harsh clash. Instinctively White turned a side glance at Jingles' mother, who stared stupidly at the inspector. Only Jingles made merry.

"Are you sure?" broke from half a dozen guests.

"Quite sure." The inspector snapped a bonbon with Jingles, and pretended the snapper had given him a mortal wound. "Quite sure," he repeated.

"I suppose father isn't coming," said Jingles sadly. "He'll probably ride in late to-night when everything is eaten up. That's the worst of living at a post where you can't buy things. You have to send away for them in packages. Mother sends clear to China for her teas, and——"

"Oh, Jingles, look at this big chocolate cream—that's the sort we used to

buy at school," interrupted Caldwell. "Try him. He'll be juicy."

An awkward pause fell over the party. The inspector crossed his knife and fork on his plate, and coughed significantly. Little Mrs. Fleming blushed furiously.

"It's extravagant, I know," she apologized. "But I really cannot get good things here—"

"Of course not," agreed Caldwell heartily.

Every man stared at her mercilessly. The tension was painful.

Just then, Bimbi, the exile, bounded into the room. With utmost tact, White had persuaded Jingles to omit his name from the list of guests. He had chained him to a post outside. But Bimbi's white teeth undid the chain, and he jumped happily about, dragging a tattered red cushion after him. The strain snapped.

"Hi, there!" shouted White. "That's my best and most sacred sofa pillow. Here, you image, come here—the little beast has ripped it down one—"

A thud sounded, and from the depths of the red pillow there fell a box, peculiar in shape, unmistakable in make. Bimbi chattered merrily. He blinked his narrow black eye at White, as if enjoying his revenge.

"Open that box," said Stanton, in a low tone.

Obediently, Caldwell reached over to take it from White's trembling hands.

"It is opium," he said presently. "See!"

The inspector peered at the sticky, inky mixture within.

A cry of horror came from Mrs. Fleming. She reached one yellow hand toward Caldwell.

"No—no—Jim didn't do that—" she began hysterically.

Stanton cut in with, "Mrs. Fleming, I accuse—"

"The jig is up," said White abruptly, pulling off his fool's cap and standing nearer Caldwell. "I have smuggled that stuff for some time—and eaten it. Don't know why I did it. Natural degeneracy, I suppose. I may as well make this confession right now. I or-

dered all the things for Mrs. Fleming from China. I have hidden behind her skirts. Jingles, I'm afraid your party is called off."

"Jim," interposed Caldwell roughly, "you're a fool—"

"So it seems," said White stolidly. "I suppose this means Bilibid, doesn't it?" Bilibid is the military prison in Manila.

"Naturally," answered Stanton, in a far-away voice, still staring at Jingles' mother.

Caldwell came to the front. He dismissed the guests, pledging them to silence until he officially made the case known. He sent Jingles off in Ralafez's hands—a very quiet and serious Jingles, who knew that something rather raw had happened; and that, if his father had come instead of the scrubby civilian, he would have been allowed to proceed unmolested.

"Won't you please go to your room?" Caldwell asked Alice Fleming, after the others had left.

"Jim," she sobbed, still stretching out her hands to White, "I can't stand this. Edith—Edith will never—"

"Please don't mind," White told her huskily. "It—it really does not matter. I think there's the school kids come to—to serenade Jingles, Cald. They're inside the courtyard," he added carelessly. "Better give the little beggars some stuff. They'll be disappointed."

"Come inside, White," the inspector ordered curtly.

Without a glance at the sobbing woman, White followed. Caldwell joined them presently.

"I want your whole story, boy," the inspector said sharply. "You don't look like an opium eater."

"Probably not. I'm sturdy and of rather good stock," he explained. "But I've had the habit some time. Shows in my eyes mostly; pupils distended, then very small—can't see straight enough to shoot. Fearfully morbid at times. Got the chills, too."

"I see," said the inspector.

"I think it'll be time enough to bring out details at the trial," interposed Caldwell. "Jim, I'm going to put you on your parole of honor until five o'clock

to-morrow morning. Understand? At five o'clock—we'll start."

White's under lip drew in sharply. "Start" meant march north to Tacloban, the province capital, where he would be tried and sentenced to Bilibid. Mechanically, he lifted his arm in a return salute.

"Will you go outside, Stanton?" asked Caldwell. "And tell Davis, Fernal, Mahoney, and Lewis to come in?"

Still White's under lip quivered persistently. He knew what was to come.

When the door closed on Stanton's bulky form, Caldwell reached forward to grasp his hand.

"You fool," he said brokenly. "Shavetail—you glorious fool!" Shavetail is the slang name for young officer.

"What else was there to do?" asked White dully. "Let *her* sister be branded throughout the service? Let *her* name be disgraced? Let that boy's mother be deported as an opium fiend, a— God, Cald, I haven't any choice in the matter! I—I think some special providence slated all this to happen æons ago. It's so pat, you see; dovetails beautifully." He turned his head away that Caldwell might not watch the quivering features.

In that brief second alone, not looking into each other's eyes, both men knew that White was paying the price demanded of his sex. That the birth pangs of his own mother had made him the debtor of every other woman. The chance to save the weaker soul was thrust upon him. It was man's tribute to woman's frailty. And White had been a man long before the psychology professor unconsciously baptized him Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face.

"You're giving up everything," faltered Caldwell. "Her—your honor—the service—the service!"

The last wrung a groan from him. The service of an American officer! The dearest, finest thing in life to any man. And the gray, grim walls of Bilibid, military dungeon, peopled with deserters, forgers, thieves, traitors.

"All I ask," he said hoarsely, "is that she tell Rob the truth. He must know—he must get her out of here. When they're as far gone as she is,

there's no hope. The truth would come out, you see. She'd be found guilty before the year was up. I'll save her now, but—later—"

"Save yourself," pleaded Caldwell, with that great wave of selfish, masculine loyalty that sometimes sweeps men out of their normal relationship to human beings and leaves them conscious of only one paramount, dominant race—Men!

Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face smiled bitterly.

"Make her tell, Rob; and get the kid in a good school back East," was all he answered.

Then Caldwell understood. The door opened, and the men filed in. They stood about with lowered eyes. One of them shook as if he were the guilty person, and another gulped hysterically when Caldwell began the simple but so vital reprimand. It was virtually taking White's office from him.

There was something said in distinct tones about "for the betterment of the service." White's head swam as the words hurled their meaning upon him. And when Cald's tender voice said slowly: "For conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, James Edward White, you are hereby sent to Tacloban, where the civil law may—" Everything went dark, and he saw only Edith's face smiling tenderly at him as if she were close beside him, unmindful of the disgrace in which he was wrapped.

The men filed out slowly, and Stanton stood by with gloating eyes—after all, it had been a hard case and a baffling one, and this meant a word of praise from the powers that be—while Caldwell finished simply: "Jim—you better go to Tacloban in—other togs."

No one but a soldier knows what that means. We who dress in hodge-podge, conglomerate costumes, first blue, then brown, now short, now long, now thick, now light—we do not know what that means. But Cald knew; and he held out his hand to say:

"If this could be any different, Jim, I'd move heaven and earth to do it. I would rather lose my right arm than to

take you north in the morning. As superior officer to subordinate officer, you are guilty of one of the basest offenses against your country that a man is capable of. As man to man—I hope to God it may come right yet.”

Stanton made an ineffectual protest about leaving White at large. To which Caldwell replied with cutting sarcasm, and excused him inwardly on the grounds that he was only a civilian.

The shavetail left the comandancia slowly. He was free to walk about or to sleep or eat until five o'clock that next morning. He could talk to no one; but there was no one with whom he wished to speak. He was free to write to Edith, and tell her what had happened. But what was the use? He could write only lies to her, and written lies are worse than spoken untruths.

He met Jingles coming slowly along the outer path. Jingles, whose sharp ears had learned of the trouble, knew that his future uncle was to be taken far away and not be allowed to be a soldier any longer. One of the men had said he was a “low-browed cad.” Jingles resented that very much.

Caldwell and his mother had told him not to speak to the prisoner; that even if his chin quivered and he wanted to say good-by, he must not stop. Men were made of sterner stuff. So the small, white-suited figure stalked by with a stiff military salute; and White turned to gaze with strained, tense eyes at the child dragging himself unwillingly onward.

“I believe I’ll go back and tell Cald to lock me up,” White told himself. “I don’t feel—right. It’d be easier than this—if I met Alice, I might say things—I’ll go to the guardhouse and tell them—”

But he found himself walking away from the guardhouse. It was after six now, and chow was being served. There were eleven hours before they would start. He knew how the raw morning air would nip them, how the fresh, stinging breeze would sweep over the ponies and make them balky and hard to manage. He would probably find himself acting like a native, making

futile appeals for mercy and attempting suicide. He looked at the sleepy old bay regretfully—but he was too good a swimmer to try that.

After all, it was quite a natural thing. There was nothing so remarkable about his taking the blame. He was the only available person. Caldwell was too valuable a man for the service, and they wouldn’t have believed it of him. The others couldn’t have seen the necessity—they were different. Besides, Alice was *her* sister. Perhaps it was even fortunate—

He found himself moving swiftly toward the hills. And there started within himself a secret, gnawing desire that made him hot with shame. How easy it would be to escape! Why should he, an innocent man, be sent to a living death? What was the harm? Alice was saved; no other innocent person would be sent in his place. Why should he go to Bilibid? He had told a big, chivalrous lie. He had faced the disgrace that cuts deeper than any heart tragedy hints at. He had relinquished his hold upon life; his chance to make a name for himself. Even if he did escape—there were plenty of tramp steamers he could catch—he would be obliged to lead a fugitive’s existence; go to some small South American republic, and be satisfied. Surely this was not too much to ask of a fate that had caused him to cry quits with all that he had won fairly for himself?

He pulled himself together with a jerk, and turned back toward the comandancia. He would go straight to Caldwell, and beg to be put in irons, to be imprisoned like any native until five o’clock should come. He was a coward. Only he must not hear Alice’s voice. He would break down if he did. There was one low, vibrant note in it like *hers*.

But he turned in the opposite direction, and made for the hills. He knew, as a native knows, the mysterious caves, the under passages formed by volcanic action centuries ago. He could wriggle his way through the apparently solid rock, while the scouts outside were searching for him. In his heart, he knew Caldwell would be glad.

But he was on his word of honor. There came to him the droning voice of the old professor saying that every soul is dual in its composition. That when one-half does a generous act to save another, the other half rouses to action and makes the person commit fully as despicable a thing as that which he lied about. No soul can be wholly good. Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face!

Well, suppose he did desert? Impulsively, White squeezed his body through an opening in the rock. This was where the long passage really started. He had traveled through it many times in search of head-hunters or stray pulajanes. On, on, on—now low, now high—up still higher—down very low.

His mind was clear now as to his plan of action. He would go to the end of the cave and find the secret outlet. He could catch that ragged little tramp ship, the *Altes*, that sailed early in the morning. It was lucky he spoke their mixture of Spanish and native. Then he would forget who he was. He would lose his identity, become a new, strange sort of being, with neither soul nor conscience, and, above all, without memory. He would live for the things in life that most men counted as a waste. He would— Without warning, he stepped down almost a foot, and found a newly made outlet which was unfamiliar. He paused to debate whether to go the old way to the coast or explore the new passage. The spirit of recklessness seemed to surge to the top. He turned in the unfamiliar direction.

Creeping in an underground passage in the Philippine rock beds causes a weird sensation. There is a bewildered feeling that comes from the cold, sometimes glittering, walls of rock, the clinging, heavy earth that soothes the frightened, tired feet, and promises to bury them cleverly if they become too confused to wander farther. Sometimes White stood erect, more often he crouched on all fours and felt his way along, inch by inch. An innocent man escaping! There was a grim humor about the situation that set his pulses throbbing. Had he been out of the passage, he could have laughed. But the

narrow walls stifled any effort to make a sound. And he cursed the government that permits scout officers to drag finely organized white women into the unexplored Hades of their nursery possessions.

Suddenly, and without warning, he put his hand out to grasp a jagged bit of rock; and, instead, he felt the body of a living person!

It was half past four, and the morning air was raw and wet. The bodyguard and the guides were ready to march north to Tacloban. Stanton sat inside Caldwell's room watching Caldwell play solitaire with a nonchalant air. There was a superior smile on the civilian's face that made Caldwell have to keep the checkrein on his temper. Every other minute he would glance out the open door to see if there was any sign of the prisoner.

At twenty minutes of five, Stanton said sarcastically:

"Is there any one coming, Sister Anne?"

"Jim will be here," answered Caldwell firmly. "Jim will be here."

"Indeed. Then Jim has taken his time showing up. I think you'll find Jim on a tramp steamer bound for South America."

Caldwell laid down the cards slowly.

"See here, Stanton," he told the grinning person, "I'll stake my last dollar that Jim White shows up. He's not a quitter. Do you suppose I'd have given him his parole if I hadn't been sure of him? Did you think I was canine enough to take him to the guardhouse and tie him with rope, the same as we do with the brown species? Wouldn't you have given him twelve hours more of being a man?"

"Not when he knew that five o'clock meant starting north."

Caldwell rose and went to the doorway.

"Has he come?" he asked a *muchacho*.

"No come," said the native wistfully. And in his heart Caldwell was both glad and sorry.

Alice Fleming came to the door, pale and red-eyed.

"No word?" she asked softly. "From either of them—or from Rob?"

"Not yet," Caldwell told her, with a kind of fierce sympathy.

"I told him not to go away," went on the little woman. "But he's only a baby—Jingles!"

"Jingles has been missing since White was given his parole?" asked Stanton suspiciously.

Caldwell turned on him like a flash.

"Yes; Jingles has been missing since six o'clock last evening. What of it? White is detained. I'm positive of that. Have I ever in any way neglected my duty? Listen to me: If this man has not showed up or sent word in five minutes—I'll—send out the guides."

Stanton left the room with a supercilious air. Jingles' mother turned wearily away.

"If he's lost in the hills!" she murmured to herself.

"The little beggar is safe in some native hut," Caldwell assured her. "I'm sure of it. He was caught in the storm last night, and crawled to shelter. Don't worry—about him."

"Then you do think he's all right?" she pleaded. "When his father comes, and he isn't here, what can I say? Have I, too, ever neglected my duty? And Jim—and Edith. It's all so hard. Caldy, it will kill her."

"I know your secret," Caldwell whispered to her, without warning.

"You know——"

"I know. Jim White knew. You must tell your husband."

"Not that—not that," she begged. "Just a little longer—it won't be long to wait now. Don't make me tell Rob. I couldn't go back and leave him; and it's been the climate that's caused it. It hasn't been my fault. I couldn't have Jingles separated from Rob——" She strained her head away.

"You must tell your husband," repeated Caldwell mercilessly. "Tell him as soon as he comes back. The thing has gone quite far enough."

Bewildered, the little woman nodded feebly.

"Very well," she said brokenly. "How—long have you known?"

"For some time," he told her coldly.

Stanton came back quickly.

"I command you to send out the men," he said sharply. "It is five o'clock."

Ralafez came running into them. "The *capatihan Americano* is lost," she wailed. "The beautiful *capatihan* (white baby)! All night have I searched—no one has seen him—Santa Maria—he is lost!" She buried her head in her hands.

"Take your mistress to her room," said Caldwell between set teeth. "I'll send the scouts to find them both."

"So you thought White would show up?" added Stanton, smiling. "What a fool he'd have been, wouldn't he—now? You certainly gave him every chance."

Caldwell's heavy brows contracted dangerously.

"Thank God," he muttered, "there are few of your stripe in the service! All Manila would have to be reconstructed into one vast Bilibid."

At the first touch of the warm body, White experienced a sensation of joy. He realized that climbing through mountain caverns breeds loneliness and despair, and he was glad to have met another of his own kind. He wondered if this desperado, be he native or white, was running away from a crime he had never committed.

The body was limp—it was absurdly small. After a careful investigation of the arms and head, White gave a startled cry.

"It's a kid!" he said out loud, the echo rumbling down the length of the cavern. "I wonder if I dare strike a match?"

The peculiar air warned him of explosive gases, so he put his head down on the small white breast, and listened for the regular beats.

"He's done up," he commented briefly. "He's a white kid. He's—he's—Jingles!"

For the next five minutes, White worked feverishly to bring back consciousness. A thousand thoughts came

to him in the time he was inducing respiration, slapping his hands and feet, rubbing his head. What was Jingles doing in the cavern? Lost, strayed, or stolen? What was the post doing? What was his mother doing? White's lips curled scornfully as he thought of her. How long had the boy been here? Whose fault was it? Suddenly he stopped working over the body, and said aloud:

"How can I get him back? *What time is it?*"

As no way of telling time in an underground passage has been discovered, White contented himself with rousing the limp little figure and giving thanks that he had tried to escape. Another two hours in that hole might have finished the child.

By and by, Jingles moved his yellow head feebly, and murmured: "Uncle Jim is way off—too late," waving his arms excitedly.

"Uncle Jim is right on tap, old man," said White, as gently as a woman. "We're going home now. Know the way? Put your arms around my neck—that's it—hold tight—tight as you can. Never mind questions, be a man. Your mother will ask enough. I've got to do some rotten crawling for a few feet. Where the hell did you think you were going? Damn this rock! Why—why, Jingles, what's this—"

Ahead was a faint streak of light. The passageway must have been recently dug through. Jingles clung faithfully to his future uncle's cold, dripping neck, his eyes closed and his lips parched and bleeding.

On and on the two crawled. As they neared the doorway of the cave, there came to White another jarring thought.

"I'm a deserter. I'm liable now, innocent or not innocent!"

He paused, letting Jingles slide down to the earth. There would still be time for him to get the steamer if he went straight ahead and left— White was glad no one could see the red flush of shame that rushed into his tired face. Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face! The professor had been right. White could not save his own situation.

"Jingles, old man, you've taken my honor and put it in a double-barreled safety vault," he whispered to the unconscious child. "You've been the keystone of this whole miserable farce. God bless you!"

He went on doggedly, a glad smile on his face, hoping that it was not yet five o'clock. The post saw him coming, his long, thin arms holding something small and white. And at ten minutes past five, begrimed and footsore, James White, smuggler, deserter—gentleman, staggered into Caldwell's embrace with the missing Jingles at his side.

"Jim," was all Caldý said. "Jim, I knew, I knew!"

Then the post fell upon Jingles, and Jingles' mother refused to let any one touch him but herself; and Stanton found himself in a remote corner of the courtyard arguing out with himself the fine points of what constitutes an ass. After the official postponement of the trip until the prisoner was in traveling shape, Caldwell came into White's room and grasped his hand firmly.

"Isn't there any way in heaven or earth, or even the Philippines, that we can save you, boy?" he was just saying, when the galloping feet of a tired horse told them that Robert Fleming was returning.

Five minutes later saw a weary man clasping his small son tightly, and congratulating himself he had been so delayed as to escape the last twelve hours of agony.

Now, Caldwell was not a naturally cruel man. But something about the shavetail's sacrifice of all that was bright in life and his saving the child made him long to see the guilty person cringe. So he called Major and Mrs. Fleming into White's room, and told the latter that he wished her to tell her husband the truth. In fact, he demanded that she do so.

And Fleming, to whom the news of White's disgrace had not yet been broken, stared at his wife with shocked, startled eyes.

Jingles' mother held out her hands earnestly to her husband, as she said slowly:

"Rob, I've been having a leakage of the heart for two years; it can't go on very much longer; but I wanted to wait until the rains came again before I spoke. I thought, I hoped that you might have your promotion then, and we could go back—home."

White leaped to his feet. Caldwell grasped the table edge excitedly. Fleming folded the little woman in his arms. There was a repentant quiver in his voice as he whispered:

"Alice, you've stood this all along—I've been blinded by your love. I've never thought of anything but the joy of having you here. I'm a brute. I'm not worthy of the sacrifice, dear."

"Is that *all*?" demanded Caldwell.

"Everything—there was nothing else," she said, with a sigh of relief. "Rob had so much to worry over, it would have been selfish to have worried him with this; but I'm glad he knows." She buried her head in his shoulder.

Caldwell and White stared into each other's eyes. The woman went on:

"It's changed my looks so, Rob, I've wondered you hadn't noticed—the blue streak around my mouth, the white in my cheeks, my eyes—but you loved me so that it didn't matter, did it?"

And while Fleming, unconscious of the man's presence, held her tightly, murmuring the foolish lover's words of assurance, Caldwell's heart gave a violent throb, and he whispered: "Jim, there's a big mistake—you're not going to keep this up—this lie—we've made a mess of it—a holy, smoking mess!"

A *muchacho* came to the door timidly. Master Jingles was awake and weeping copiously. He was afraid his Uncle Jim had started north, and he had much to tell them about the sticky stuff in the funny box.

"Bring him in," said Caldwell, a faint hope dawning.

Jingles' mother put out her hand to touch White's shoulder.

"Oh, my boy," she said softly, "if we can only make this come right."

"What the devil is the row?" demanded Fleming abruptly.

But the *muchacho* came in softly, carrying Jingles, immaculate in white pa-

jamás, and a native fan in his small brown hands.

"Don't hug me yet, mother," he said drowsily, "else I'll forget. And it's all im-por-tant evi-dence." He stumbled over the syllables patiently. "Please bring in the other man that came to the party in father's place. He's im-por-tant evi-dence, too."

"What do you know about your Uncle Jim?" demanded Caldwell.

"Lots. But he mustn't go north—the sticky stuff was never his. It belonged to four yellow people—wait till the other man comes in. I don't want to have to repeat, you see."

Stanton stationed himself in the doorway. Caldwell and White stood shoulder to shoulder in the center of the room. Jingles' father held him tightly on his knee, and his mother knelt beside him. It took Jingles a long time to tell his story. Some of it he can tell better himself, other parts would be clearer if they are made to read like a tourist's description of the Orient. But the people who heard the child's experience have never forgotten it. They still talk about it at the post as "the time the major's Get played Casablanca on dry land."

First of all, Jingles had gone to see the wounded Dumez in the hospital. He tried to forget his own sorrow at White's disgrace in listening to the native's wild wail about the neglected graves of his ancestors. And after Jingles had told Dumez to stop howling, and remember men were made of sterner stuff, he had bolted off to the native burying ground to see if the Dumez's family lot was in really bad condition.

The burying ground had been forbidden ground because of snakes, so the pleasure of helping out Dumez had been doubly keen. And, when Jingles found that just back of the graves was a little passageway, half hidden by a huge boulder, the temptation to slip in and play pirate was too great to resist.

The passageway opened into a long corridor—in some spots Jingles could walk erect. He stumbled along the uneven path, letting his imagination run

riot. But after some time had passed, and he had played every possible game that the scenic setting allowed, he yearned for his evening chow, and a bath, and a clean suit. But the cavern proved a maze, which tangled his sense of localities so sadly that he could only grope blindly ahead, his tired feet sinking heavily into the loam.

Then he fell asleep, and, when he awakened, he saw a faint light burning ahead. Not remembering quite all that had happened, he rushed toward it, hoping it was Ralafez bringing him some biscuit and milk. But the light proved to be the uncanny flicker of candles; and, lying on his stomach and looking down, Jingles could see into the back room of the Chinese shopkeepers—the mysterious back room to which no one had access.

There were four of the Chinese. Two shopkeepers, another the carpenter, another the shoemaker—invariably the case in small barrios. They sat cross-legged on the floor, dressed in dark purple robes, their long, greasy pigtailed hanging down over the fat expanse of flabby chest. In the center of the room was a huge bowl. At the comandancia, Jingles knew it would have been called a punch bowl; and every one would have yearned to have small cups filled of the rosy water punch bowls usually contained. But this bowl seemed filled with a gray slime, sprinkled with bubbling spiders and toads and small snakes.

Jingles kept very still. He knew that his presence was not welcome at this orgy; and, when he spied the small stairs connecting with the cavern, and hidden as only the subtle Oriental knows how to hide, he determined not to cry even if both legs went sound asleep and prickled.

"They were waiting for some one," Jingles said gravely. "They were impatient because the person didn't come; and once their faces all crumpled up with rage when they thought the person was coming and didn't. And Woo Hang, the biggest one, stirred the things in the bowl with a stick.

"After a long while, the door outside did creak—you see how still I had to lie

—and Ralafez came in. I almost spoke to her at first. She had a long cape on, and her face was white and frightened looking. She got down on her knees to the Chinamen, and said in native: 'I come empty-handed; before your gods and my gods, it is not my fault.'

"Then the Chinamen all shook with rage, and chattered; and one of them took Ralafez by the hand, and led her over to the bowl, and told her that she must bring them food. Food was what they called the inky stuff."

But Jingles kept his ears pinned back, and his lips tightly closed; for he understood the native tongue as well as Ralafez herself. At times his mother despaired of ever making him an intelligent English conversationalist.

Ralafez had wept and shivered, but the Chinamen, with their exquisite power of torture, held the girl down close to the bowl, and made her inhale the loathsome mixture. She explained to them that Dumez was injured, that the secret-service inspector had tracked the smuggling, and she dared not bring them opium or hide it in the graves. That Lieutenant White had taken the blame. He was going north in the morning; and the inspector thought that he was shielding the pale woman, Jingles' mother, whom the inspector believed to be the guilty one.

At which the four Celestials laughed noiselessly—a white woman being their protector! If you have ever known the Chinese, you remember that when they are enraged they say but little. Their faces spell their anger, and the yellow, sloping features do "crumple" and become livid.

This was the way they looked at Ralafez when she pleaded their good will. But the Chinaman, without his opium, is like the sea without its salt. So they took the girl, and bound her hand and foot beside the bowl. Then Woo Hang chanted in a shrill, wavering voice:

"Oh, Thou Great Spirit—hear me! This woman cares not for Thy good will, nor her miserable husband. We, the mediums of Thy messages, know Thy wrath; but she cares not; nor her

worthless husband-dog. We, to whom the people come as guides and seers, we can do nothing with her. She is afraid—a coward; and her husband, also. You, Great One, whose honorable ears have heard horrible words spoken by the ancestors of Dumez and Ralafez, they whose dead lips have spoken untruths concerning them, do you know the cause?"

Here Ralafez groaned and cried for mercy, and the other Chinamen laughed noiselessly.

Woo Hang sang: "Dumez's ancestors, Ralafez's ancestors lived on opium—it was their honorable food. It is Thy honorable food, Father Spirit. All honorable ones eat it. Therefore, we ask these cattle to bring it to us. We have dug the cavern to their graves. We have been the mediums for the Father Spirit and these cowards. We have made their ancestors ask favors for Ralafez and Dumez—and the Father Spirit has listened. And now, because of fear, they disappoint. The dead are left starving, and will crawl with famine-stricken lips to tell lies to the Father Spirit. The Father Spirit will punish!"

Ralafez struggled.

"God in heaven—hear me—no—no!" she cried.

But the yellow hands unbound her, whispered warnings to come back within the next day with the food for the dead, or let the curse descend upon her. They tied a white snake about her neck—a burning snake that scalded the brown skin. They placed a lizard in her right hand; and Woo Hang stooped and bit the little finger of her left one savagely. Then they let her go. And, as her footsteps died away, the four yellow faces looked at each other triumphantly, and laughed noiselessly.

When Jingles finished his story, there was a horrified pause. Then Caldwell said:

"I believe it. There is no deviltry which the Chinese can't get away with. Of course, Alice never unpacked the teas herself—always Dumez?"

She nodded.

"But my baby—to see those fiends, to hear those——"

"It's imagination," said Jingles' father and Stanton simultaneously.

"It's true," declared Jingles feverishly.

"We can soon find out," added White, a look of intense relief in his eyes. "Think of their daring to do it! Cowing Dumez and Ralafez to hide opium in the graves of their dead! Making them think God was an opium eater, and wouldn't listen to the prayers of dead folk who were not. By Jove, Dumez's mother died a maniac, and Ralafez's father was a bad dope fiend. No wonder Woo Hang selected them for his bull con. Superstition—the islands' curse!"

"Call in Ralafez," said Caldwell to the *muchacho*.

Ralafez, all unconscious of the truth, came eagerly. For she loved Jingles, as did Dumez; and in all ways within their limitations they were loyal. Dumez and Ralafez would have died to save Jingles from mere physical injury. But true to their ancestry of superstition and ignorance, they believed that their dead would whisper lies to the Almighty Spirit unless they provided them with opium which would make them see and think all things were good.

Caldwell caught Ralafez roughly, drawing back her abaco-cloth waist. A small white scar showed on the brown neck—a scar that encircled it like a necklace. On the little finger of her left hand was the cruel mark of one long tooth. At a single glance, one would have said it came from a wolf's fangs.

"That will do," said Caldwell briefly. "You can go."

"Thank God!" said Jingles' mother softly.

Caldwell, anticipating Stanton's thoughts, turned to Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face to say sternly:

"White—you are liable for desertion in spite of this unfortunate mistake. You realize that?"

And White, the light of salvation dying out of his face, answered: "Yes,

sir." After all, it was good to say "Yes, sir" to something you had really done. There was a freedom of emotion that was soothing.

"However," continued Caldwell, his eyes smiling, "I understand the extenuating circumstances. Ordinarily it would be bad business. But, of course, you had heard the natives talking about Jingles' disappearance, and you went to look for him. Isn't that it?"

He looked at the shavetail with a bullying expression. For Caldwell, though never in White's junior psychology class, knew in layman fashion the boy's mental make-up. And he was afraid he would blurt out the unbecoming truth, admitting that he had run away from the crime of which he was innocent. That would give the grinning Stanton person room for hasty action.

"Isn't that it?" he repeated sternly.

The room was strangely still. Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face, weary yet rested,

forgot the gantlet of emotions which he had run. He forgot Caldwell's kindly interrogated lie, Jingles' tired, wan little face, Ralafez's sobs, Alice Fleming's faded eyes, Stanton's sneer, and Fleming's grave look of inquiry. All the thin psychological theories, his duty to the service, punishment of Woo Hang's den faded into nothingness. And the shavetail stared foolishly into space, visualizing a golden-haired girl far across the sea, the unconscious cause of all this tangle—the woman who need never know but the farcical side of the occurrence.

"Isn't that it?" asked Caldwell anxiously, for the third time.

Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face came to himself abruptly. Putting one soiled hand up to his tousled head, he looked into the eyes of his superior officer with a far-away lover's expression.

"Yes, sir," said Man-Afraid-Of-His-Face simply.



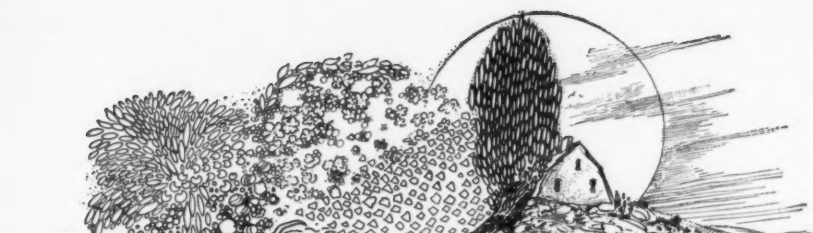
DEPRAVITY

AH, I was happy, and blithe, and young;
And life was sweet, and its pleasures hung
Like golden apples so near my hand
That I wondered, and could not understand
When the Wise Ones said—in sinister glee—
That these were folly, and not for me!

And they led me onward by devious ways,
And pointed out to my wondering gaze
The Good and the Bad, that I might see
The beautiful things that were not for me;
And one was Folly—a lithesome maid,
And she was timid and half afraid,
Till the Wise Ones turned where they could not see—
Oh, sweet were the kisses she gave to me!

Ah! I am sinful and weak, I know,
If hating the Wise Ones makes me so;
Though they've bound my feet to the Narrow Way,
My passionate heart is still astray.
And I dream of the beautiful, lithesome maid
Who, shy, and trembling, and half afraid,
Comes when the Wise Ones cannot see,
And sweet are the kisses she gives to me!

WILL LISENBEE.



At Outs and Ins with Dallie *Marion Hill*

WHEN majestic old Miss Dering, of Riverside Heights, came to the good-tempered and sensible conclusion that her hospitality, renowned and sought after though it was, would dispense itself more happily through younger hands, and therefore imported out of the West a very pretty Montana niece, she never dreamed that one of the men to "hang around Ernesta," as she expressed it, would be Dallie.

Dallie—and the whole of him was Helmscott Dallingwood—did not have to "hang around" anywhere unless he was campaigning. His self, his money, and his family made him widely eligible; especially his family, for it was not only good, but dead, consequently Dallie could be, and was, asked everywhere, since an invitation to him did not entail likewise laborious selection among his relatives. Dallie was as omnipresent as the sky, and almost as distant. He answered all intimate questions so fully and freely that very little was really known about him; it is the close-mouthed ones who pique the world into making discoveries. That he was definitely nice-looking and indefinitely cold of temperament seemed the sum of his record—a clean and pleasant one.

The attraction between Dallie and Ernesta was antagonism. Miss Dering the elder was wise enough to feel encouraged.

Ernesta's trace of crudeness needed the tutoring of Dallie's subtleties, just as her attack of "mothering the slums" needed the medicine of his cynicism. Not that her crudeness showed as unreserve or lack of caution. Quite the other way. She was still "Montana" enough to imagine that anything really mattered; consequently she conserved privacies of opinion, and was apt to rebel against being led into parting with them, which made her a charmingly ingenuous young girl. And Dallie was a good safety valve for too much ingenuousness.

Old Miss Dering refused to attach importance to his continually "turning up."

To-night his excuse was a book for herself. Though Dallie's best excuse for appearing was appearance. He certainly was a personable man. Standing before his old hostess, making his small presentation very courteously, composed and handsome in the warm lamplight, he gave the stately room the one vague touch of completeness which it had lacked. The prettiest drawing-room in the world needs a man in it at night before it looks just right. Even Ernesta, sitting pensively and prettily afar at the fireplace, admitted this, constrainedly at variance with Dallie though she was.

Miss Dering had a fireplace because she wanted a motto over it. This was: "Heare ys ye plaice of restynge. Lette

no soards crosse." After a fireplace, a fire; and it generally was there, the big hall taking kindly, even toward summer, to the glow of it.

Ernesta used to love to croon beside this hearth, like old age, seeing pictures in the embers. Old Miss Dering had no time for crooning. She had to put on glasses, sit under the center lamp, and keep up with young literature.

"Is it good?" she asked, accepting Dallie's book.

"Very. The worst yet."

"And why am I supposed to read a bad book?" asked she, rather coldly, considering it was her Dallie she was speaking to.

"So as to know exactly why it is your duty to swear you have never read a line of it."

"H'm! I may own more regard for truth than you think."

"Maybe. But I hope not."

"What have you against truth?" Miss Dering put this severely through her lorgnette.

"Just truth. Giving both the benefit of the doubt, who is to distinguish it from lies? What is a lie? Only a truth that wasn't allowed to work."

"Ha!" Miss Dering panted this out warmly, like a leopard who had wanted meat and been tendered a peanut. "Get a wife, Dallie." She cuttingly opened the book, as if hunting for real companionship. "Then your requirements of truth will go up."

"That strengthens me to stay single. While I remain unmarried, I shall never be found out."

"And what, pray, is there to find out?"

"Nothing. Which is the secret of keeping a wife busy."

If anybody as correct as Miss Dering ever snorts, then Miss Dering snorted.

"Go away, Dallie. Are not you ashamed to talk like an idiot?"

"Not after having heard the wise."

"Go away, I said. Go entertain Ernesta."

"Entertain?"

Miss Dering laughed. She laughed like a sneeze.

"Tch! Vivisect, then. Go away, Dallie."

"Your aunt sends me to vivisect you," he told Ernesta, strolling over to the hearth and taking a chair opposite her.

His position allowed him two amusements; he could stare at Ernesta till he got warm, and then cool himself over the fire. She was that sort of a girl, and it was that sort of a fire.

Ernesta greeted him with a slight soul surge of uncertainty, as even the best of children meet the social advances of a teacher. Who knows when the affair might turn out to be lessons?

"Good evening, Mr. Dallingwood," she mentioned safely, as she thought.

Her dress was of a pink tint so pale as to seem white; and it deepened to rose where the fire flecked it, just as the pale glow of her face flushed and blushed at her own words and his. She was like apple blossoms against a sunset sky.

"Call me Dallie," he ordered.

"Why?" she questioned stiffly. Trying to show how little concerned she was over his familiarity, she reddened maddeningly.

"Either that or 'Hel.' I advise 'Dallie' first. Sounds like thunder from the pulpit—to dally on the way to 'Hel.'"

"Now, Dallie!" croaked old Miss Dering warningly from the center distance, her eyes shooting sparks over the top of her book.

"Keep on. You are nearly to the badness," he encouraged, as if once there she would no longer have ears for foreign conversation. Then to the niece: "I am merely trying to convince you that life is too short to use 'Helm-scott Dallingwood' much."

"For what, then, is a name?"

"Checks and tombstones."

"Is it wise to be flippant over serious things?"

"Checks?"

"Tombstones."

"It would be flippant to be wise over mine, since I have none as yet. But talk about Mr. Peters."

"You do not like him."

"That is why I want to hear things about him."

"Well," rather victoriously, "they tell me down at the Settlement House that Mr. Peters has just donated several thousand dollars to the cause of temperance."

"More shame to him. A man like that is a menace."

"For encouraging temperance?"

"Last thing in the world to encourage. Temperance is the pause which excess takes while drawing breath to go ahead."

"That is not funny!"

"Not at all. How fair you are to me! Were it not for your philanthropy, you would be a most charitable-minded girl," he decided. "Philanthropy, being a treat which the rich permit themselves at the poor's expense, undermines strict integrity. But you *try* to be fair."

"I do not."

"No?" reprovingly.

"Dallie!" came a second croak.

He got up, went over to the old lady, gently took the book from her, hunted through it, found a certain place, and as gently reinsinuated the volume. Her eyes, catching some words, stuck. He stood a moment watching her, like a physician remaining to see if a hypodermic has taken, concluded that it had, and walked back to his seat at the fire.

"Fairness is not only the greatest charm of woman, but her rarest," he continued unbrokenly to Ernesta.

"Then a man's greatest charm is—generosity and almsgiving," stammered Ernesta, angry that he could make her angry.

"Gospel according to Mr. Peters?"

"Gospel according to every one! I'd never on earth marry a man who wasn't a giver to the poor!"

"That immunizes a big percentage of us," noticed Dallie cheerfully.

Behind her book, old lady Dering winced, but kept still. Ernesta needed just what she got—to make her perfect. By tripping her on her own unnecessary candor, Dallie was simply putting her on guard, saving her from making a fool of herself before some other man, who might take advantage of it. "Lette

no soards crosse," indeed! Why, the hearth was fairly a-clash with pitted steels!

That particular tilt kept up for an hour more, Ernesta making brave thrusts in defense of her principles, Dallie foiling them all with so little effort that they seemed ridiculous. She was desperately glad when he finally made his farewells to both, and left.

"You look done up," commented Miss Dering, eying results in her niece.

"He tires me out," confessed Ernesta, in a bewildered way.

"Don't take him so seriously," advised her aunt, shutting her book with a convincing slap.

"Oh, I don't, I don't!" cried Ernesta, reddening beautifully. It was as if she had been accused of, and was repelling, a shameful crime.

"You do. He doesn't tire *me* out!"

"He lets you alone," mentioned Ernesta naively.

"Perhaps he does," agreed her aunt shortly. "Well, Ernesta, if I'm scheduled to go with you on your wild career of mercy to-morrow, it's time for bed."

Her expression for the philanthropic tour turned out the next day to be descriptively correct. Before Ernesta's charitable visits were over, old Miss Dering's good-natured determination to "stick them out" began to weaken. Slum streets were hard on the elegant old lady's beaded suède shoes. Her bonnet of lilacs and lace commenced to tilt angle-wise. Finally she caught sight of Dallie walking just ahead. He was a seraphically unexpected vision. Dallie on a cheap sidewalk! She poked him in the back with her white parasol, despite Ernesta's breathless attempt at frustration.

"Turn around!" was the command which went with the poke.

"How many times?" was his cheerful greeting, as he stood with uncovered head.

Nature had intended Dallie for a blond; but he had counteracted her so skillfully by his adoption of opposing garbs and moods that no one considered him anything but a dark man.

Whether light or dark, he was a splendid sight on a dingy street.

"Where are you going?" demanded Miss Dering of him.

"If I knew, I should turn back," said he. "Have no idea."

"To perdition!" exploded Miss Dering. To stand successfully Dally's annoying replies, a person needed freshness of spirit.

"Ah?" questioned he amiably. "You, then, are familiar with the way?"

Miss Dering's anger broke up in a wild burst of mirth. She went "Tch!" once.

"I'll tell you why I want to know," she confided. "I'm at my last gasp." When tired, Miss Dering used words that were Biblically simple. "Ernesta has walked my legs off. I must get home. But she has yet another hole to poke into. Can you take her?"

"With delight," he said very calmly.

"Then I am gone," said Miss Dering thankfully. And she was.

"Lead into the hole," he said to Ernesta, thus putting the expedition into her hands.

He walked along beside her, so tall that she had to look up to him. To have to look up to a person whom a person wants to look down upon clogs eloquence.

"I dislike to have you sacrifice your time," was all she could find to say.

"To throw time away is putting it to its best use."

"That has an idle sound."

"Then I hit on the right words."

"Oh, do not pretend to praise idleness!"

"I never will. I praise it without pretense. Work should not be confounded with wage-earning. To be idle is to work for the soul instead of the body. That is why the church condemns it."

"Why, what do *you* know of the church?"

In the short time he had already made her furious.

"Very little. Only what it shows me."

"Do you go?"

"Oh, yes. In the vaudeville of life, religion is a bought coupon, very useful

to exhibit to the devil to get by him when he plays doorkeeper. Why are you hurrying?"

Conquering a healthy Montana desire to say "In order to be over with this," she substituted rather lamely: "Why, I promised to be at old Mrs. Trenk's—that's where we are going—at five o'clock."

"Punctuality is more blessed to receive than to give. It is the assessment which we levy upon our friends in order to float our own stock of procrastination. Don't hurry. Saunter. No one was ever punctual at an appointment without having to wait for the other one. A man who prefers not to waste time had better avoid ever being punctual."

"But I am a woman," interposed Ernesta, to be scathing.

"Sufficient!" he said. "Wipes out punctuality completely."

"Mayn't I tell you about the children's hospital?" she begged; nor were the words irrelevant as they sounded. They carried the meant and intense suggestion that her aims in life were serious, and that she could froth and frivol no longer.

They got along very well for a while, she confiding to him the desires and needs of the institution, he piloting her carefully around children, and dogs, and drunks, and listening with apparent sanity. But, when she came to the point of mentioning that she had advised the president of the "Sweetness and Light Club" to approach Mr. Peters for a donation, he went suddenly to pieces.

"To Peters for sweetness and light?" he questioned. Concluding picturesquely: "Who goes to skunks to borrow cologne?"

"Oh, who goes to skunks to borrow anything?" impatiently.

"Maybe skunks," patiently.

She stopped in the street—alley, rather—and stamped her foot, saying:

"I, for myself, think 'skunk' is a disgusting word!"

He perforce stopped, too, admitting fully:

"I, for myself, know it is."

"Then why did you use it?"

"To be disgusting."

"So you don't love Mr. Peters?"

"No."

"Which *may* be to his credit!"

"Is to mine."

"What do you know about him?"

"That he is a sham."

"I simply do not believe it!"

"Disbelief in a trap has skinned many a—a possum."

"Oh, I wish you'd talk like a human! Is it not possible for you to speak sincerely?"

"So possible that I am in constant dread of it."

"What is your objection to sincerity?"

"Mine? None. It is the others who object."

"I do not!"

"There are others. And others."

His placidity was so imperturbable that she suddenly felt her own vehemence to be underbred. Her charming and ready color went flying into her face.

"I am making an exhibition of myself," she faltered, walking on.

"You are," he agreed.

The words were uncomplimentary; but his satisfied inspection of her face contradicted them. And he was piloting her again very carefully.

"This is Mrs. Trenk's," she said, coming finally to a tumble-down door in a hovel.

"I am sorry for Mrs. Trenk," was his critical deduction from it.

"Wait till you see her," mourned Ernesta.

"The longer the better."

But Mrs. Trenk was soon to be seen. Her door opened right in to her one apartment, and disclosed her sitting in a corner, ensconced in a rocking-chair, but bending forward and leaning on a cane—a withered and monkeylike old woman, with eyes of shining coals. Her mouth was toothless, and she kept working it as if she had a pin there she was trying to find. She was dressed in petticoat over petticoat of colors so varyingly and spottedly red that she looked like a ragged and faded old petunia.

"Mrs. Trenk, I haven't time to stay to-day, and have only come to bring you a message from the Sweetness and Light Society. They have received a report of your case, and intend to lessen your loneliness a little. Some one will be here to sit with you a while each afternoon." This was the gist of Ernesta's visit.

"And is that to prevent you a-sottin' now?" demanded the incensed crone.

She uncurled one hand from the cane, knotted it into a fist, and shook the fist at a stool.

Ernesta dropped onto it.

"Who's him?" demanded Mrs. Trenk next, shooting her cane suddenly out and up till it stabbed Dallie in the chest.

He recognized it.

"Real blackthorn," he pronounced, running his glance along it.

"Aye, that it is," mumbled the old woman, mollified. She lowered her weapon and leaned on it again. "Y'r not the fool y' look. Sot, too."

He took an edge of the bench, which was evidently bed also.

With two to listen, the old woman aired her grievance well. This was that she was unable to eat and enjoy her favorite dish of fried potatoes.

"Easy enough for *you* to make light of," scolded she, glaring at the startled Ernesta. "You with your dreams an' hopes an' lovers." Here she chewed the pin at Dallie. "But I ain't got nuthin' left but fried potatoes, no dreams, no hopes, no lovers, no nuthin', just fried potatoes. So it's a sure trial to hev no teeth for 'em. Why don't I eat *mashed* potatoes? 'Cause my stummick ain't empty for mashed potatoes, only f'r fried. Might as well tell a girl whose German beau's dead, that there are plenty of micks left. When she's missin' a dead Dutch, what's micks? Who wants mashed potatoes? There's braggadocia billies comes round here sweet'nin' and light'nin' to tell me I might be wuss off nor what I be. An' fiddle-dee-dee, say I to that, and fiddle-dee-dee again. For if it's reasonable to expect me to take real comfort thinkin' how much wuss off I might be, why

ain't it as reasonable to expect me to take real sufferin' thinkin' how much better off I might be? It is. An' I does. Any rule that goes ahead can back up just as easy. An' a few Miss Nancies comes an' warns me a new life's at hand. The blatherskites! S'pose there be? When I'm dead, the fust thing I'll tell 'em up there is no need to hurry fittin' me to *wings*. What I want straight off is teeth. Then fried potatoes to put 'em into."

She ran on in this vein till she finally ran down, falling into a mumbling doze. Ernesta beckoned to Dallie, and crept out.

They were again walking along the squalid, jostling alley.

"What hole next?" he asked unsympathetically.

"Oh, Mr. Dallingwood, don't these people touch you?"

"Too much," he said, warding her from a lurching traveler.

"They wring my heart," she said truly. "All that I can do to help seems so little. Yet their sordid lives show many a heroism—"

"As, for instance?" he interposed.

She threw him a look of poignant reproach, almost of grief, though she would have been worried to know that this last was evident.

"What good would it do to tell *you*?" was her swift accusation. "You who have never had to show loyalty, to practice economy, or application, or——"

"Economy?" he asked, pointing to a tattered little girl who threaded a precarious way through the throng, a frothing tin can in her grimy hand. "Call that economy? Well, it is. Economy is knowing how to get along without virtues while saving up to buy vice. And why advise application? What's application? If application lifts a juror to a judge's bench, so also does it land a burglar behind bars. The application of the flea"—looking at an illustrative canine munching himself on a curb—"keeps many a good dog thin."

Ernesta stopped in her walk, showing that their ways had parted.

"I cannot stand you any more," she said simply.

All along she had hoped that his worldliness was half a pose, that he was better than his words. But his callous disregard of the poverty around him laid its heavy contradiction on her heart. He had bought from no beggar, had given to no child, had not pitied age. For some reason she could not explain, would not explain, her eyes went suddenly wet with tears.

"Tired?" he probed.

"Very," she stammered.

"Cab?" he further queried.

"Auntie said she would send Bruce with the car, to wait for me—on the next street—at the lamp-post—in front of the saloon."

"Stand me to the saloon," commanded Dallie, taking her there.

"Home, Bruce," she said wearily, as she climbed into the limousine and shut the door upon herself.

For a young person from Pike Fork, she took to luxury very naturally.

"Did you bring Dallie back to dinner with you?" asked Miss Dering, looking blackly at the waste space behind her pretty niece when that lonely young woman sought her out in her boudoir.

"Why, no," faltered Ernesta, trying not to feel guilt smitten.

"Did you ask him?" pursued her social mentor.

"Why, no," faltered Ernesta, a second time.

Miss Dering did not like the look of things.

"It was the least you could do," she chastised.

"So it was," said Ernesta, reluctantly seeing it.

"Did you have Bruce take him home?"

"No," answered Ernesta, to whom the word was becoming frightful.

She had no explanation to give, even to herself, of her constant pricking desire to get rid of Dallie on occasions—a desire as keen and inexplicable as her wish to see him upon other occasions.

"Not take him home," weighed Miss Dering awfully. "And after he had wasted his afternoon on you."

"I wasted mine on him!" cried Er-

nesta, her gentleness not only at bay, but fighting.

"So that's the way of it?" scoffed the old lady. "If it's the view you take, I shall be surprised ever to see Dallie here again. Mark my words."

But she would have been more surprised not to. No one knew better than herself the charm Ernesta's openness would have for a skillful stud-poker player like Dallie.

She gave him a week to stay away, which was one day too much, for he appeared in the drawing-room the evening of the sixth. Ernesta, at the hearth, in moonlighty blue this time, drew a breath of relief when she saw who it was paying court to her aunt. Her heart felt like a balloon whose tethering cord has been cut. It bounded skyward.

"Dallie, let me have a look at you," said Miss Dering, putting up her lorgnette sternly, her old face a study in fondness. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

"What I would do to others."

"What does a person ever get who questions you?"

"Answers, Miss Dering."

"Answers? Riddles?"

"They go together."

"H'm! And keep folks apart. Ernesta tells me you two had a difference of opinion."

"Only 'a'?"

"On me your brevities are wasted. Save them for a few moments. I'll soon have enough of you. She says you are hard-hearted where children are concerned. Don't you think much of them?"

"To keep up the nation, children are a tax accepted by the shrewd from the ignorant."

Miss Dering lowered her lorgnette.

"Your stuff does not penetrate my marrow," she said cheerfully, and with a variety of metaphors. "It runs off me like water off a duck's back. Douse Ernesta."

He went over to the blue hearth fairy, and surveyed her so carefully that her wings of consciousness visibly fluttered.

"Rested?" he asked semitenderly,

continuing from where he had left off a week ago.

She felt equal to combat.

"Do you know what Mr. Peters has done now?" she asked.

"Should I?"

"He has sent the best dentist in the city to Mrs. Trenk, and had the poor old creature actually fitted to some teeth!"

"It but remains for some nobler soul to furnish fried potatoes."

"I—I saw to it that she got fried potatoes," stammered Ernesta, who was beginning to be a trifle wary of flourishing her excellencies.

"Then yours is the nobler soul."

But this was not what he had come to say. He asked her if she would go with him to to-morrow afternoon's concert.

"Why, the Martha and Mary Guild meets in the basement of the church to-morrow afternoon," contributed Ernesta, a trifle disappointedly.

"And you are afraid the basement cannot stand it?" he asked, perceiving trouble of some sort.

"I am a member of the guild, and have to attend," she explained.

"Have?"

She passed this over for something else.

"I did not know you cared for music. Do you?"

She asked it rather wistfully. It would be a point in his favor if he did.

He saw this advantage, too, and considered carefully before replying. But "I buy tickets for the course," was the best he admitted.

"Haven't you any virtues?" she asked rudely.

She was not a rude person. He made her so.

"The only cure for a spotted reputation is to dye it a fast black," mused Dallie. "So I abstain wholly from virtues."

"Tch!" came from Miss Dering. It might be a sneeze. It might be a laugh.

"God bless you!" said Dallie, in masterly response to either.

"Then He will let you offer to play me a game of cribbage," said Miss Der-

ing, coming into the conversation and meaning absolutely no irreverence.

He at once got up and joined her at the table, taking cards and peg board out of their drawer.

"Come and keep the score, Ernesta," ordered Miss Dering, meaning less to ask a favor than to confer one.

This last she certainly did. And her kindness won the game for her, because, with Ernesta at his side, a shy and fragrant bit of moonlighty blue, faithfully pegging progress, Dallie would not have beaten auntie for the world. And the way that double runs came to tempt him was shameful!

The evening sped to an unusually peaceful, not to say domestic, close.

Next afternoon, Ernesta made but a dreamy and slothful Mary among the bustling Marthas of the guild. She bungled shears and needle. Her mind was not on the gingham aprons involved, but was listening to music heard through Dallie's indifferent ears, or was listening to Dallie heard through indifferent music; she could not honestly determine which. She was sure only that her soul was in the concert hall instead of in the basement.

Dismissed in due time from aprons, wandering somewhat aimlessly on the street, she met a perambulating flower vender, who helped her to a decision. She bought him out, and carried the blooms to the hospital.

Welcomed though she was by the hospital staff, she found out that Mr. Peters was there before her with more roses than she had, and bigger. She tracked his fragrant trail throughout the building, making her usual rounds, just behind him.

At wee little gurgles of joy, "Mr. Peters, distributing toys to the children," smiled a nurse.

At cackles of real laughter, a rare sound thereabouts, "Mr. Peters, telling jokes to the incurables," explained an orderly.

At congratulatory hum from the convalescents' room, "Mr. Peters, giving money to the charity patients who are going home," chuckled a house doctor.

At a hush over the restless female

ward, "Mr. Peters, holding prayer," murmured the matron gratefully.

Reaching the half-open door of a special case, Ernesta was deferentially halted by an apologetic attendant on guard.

"Just a minute, miss. Mr. Peters is reading the Bible to her. She is blind."

Ernesta peeped in, and got a good back view of him. He was a young man, evidently of infinite tenderness, for, seated beside the bed, he had stretched out one hand that the patient might hold it while he read, thus giving her the enjoyment of the best two senses left her—those of touch and hearing.

And his voice was beautiful, the tenderest Ernesta had ever heard.

From no altar could the divine words have come more feelingly. Ernesta was constrained to bend her head as if in church, following the sentences to their wonderful end.

"And inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto Me."

This is what Ernesta was thinking. The reading was over. Mr. Peters was standing up. Impoverished of roses, he took the white Cape jasmine from his buttonhole, and left it in the hand from which his own was now withdrawn.

"He is coming out," interpreted the attendant. "You may go in."

"No, I'll stay here—to speak to him," said Ernesta. "I have heard a great deal of this Mr. Peters, but have never met him. I want to."

So the attendant stepped inside, and told him:

"A lady to see you, Mr. Peters."

He came out to Ernesta at once. And he was Dallie—with unusual marks, such as soft curves to his lips, mobility in his chin, kindness in his eyes.

The start that he gave when he saw her was plainly a thing beyond his control.

But he made quick recovery, taking his customary place at her side as she marched through the corridors; and march she did.

She kept on, too, not only through the corridors, but down the marble stairway to the street.

Accurately in step, as mute as she, he

regimentally accompanied her. And her emotions were in conflict. Her first sensation, next to the surprise, had been one of joy. He was good, after all. She forgave and understood his caprice, his humble caprice, of incognito. She was glad in him. Then annoyance hurried atop. To think that she had let his clap-trap utterances impress her! That she had taken his conversational bubble and seethe to be wisdom! That she had let her honest Anglo-Saxon feel meek and lowly before his intricate Latinisms!

Their feet touching the sidewalk simultaneously, she anchored hers, and turned to speak to him.

But he spoke first. The mask was again stonily on his face. Cold analysis gleamed, or tried to gleam, from his eye.

"The wish to be dramatic," he expounded, "greed for public applause, not

love for one's fellows, is the real main-spring of all acts of human helpfulness. Christianity is the graft adopted by the timorous."

What Ernesta said to this was terrible. She let loose upon him something inexcusable, something brought with her from Montana, though never used by her there, not even in her childhood, for she had always been the nicest kind of a little girl, the best in Pike Fork. The words she said to Dallie tumbled out of her of themselves like demons. She said:

"Shut up!"

"Now that you are on the inside, Ernesta," he said firmly, "I will."

And not till she was at the jeweler's counter, having diamond rings fitted to her, did she fully realize that she had proposed to the great Mr. Helmscott Dallingwood, and been accepted.



HEART'S DESIRE

THERE is a land with sunlight on its rivers,
 There is a realm with silver on the sea;
 In every scented, vagrant wind there quivers
 The chanting of Love's elfin melody;
 And in the gardens where her hopes are springing
 From every bud in tender, green attire,
 Her still, sweet voice is never weary, singing
 Visions of heart's desire.

Musing amid green leaves she sits alone,
 With eyes wherein eternity doth sleep;
 And all the fairy visions men have known,
 All hopes they hold, all vigils that men keep,
 She weaves with magic fingers silently,
 Conjuring joy from out the depths of pain,
 As after ebb the great tides of the sea
 Set to the shore again.

For her the world is great, and wide, and free;
 Her footsteps touch the meadows into flame.
 All love and beauty, death and mystery
 Are hinted in the naming of her name.
 Wind after wind may hunt her down the world,
 Sword upon sword may harry her and mar—
 At last her crimson banners are unfurled,
 Beyond the last, dim star.

CHARLES W. KENNEDY.



An EXPERIMENT IN LIVING

BY
Courtney Ryley Cooper

A SLIGHT touch on the shoulder and Mr. Carrington Burnes, deep in an endeavor to enjoy a cigarette in the lounging room of the Huntley home, turned to see a servant at his elbow.

"It's Mrs. Burnes, sir. She wants to see you—in the blue room."

"Anything important?" the young man asked in a languid voice.

"I don't know, sir—that is—she rather spoke as if it was, sir."

"Tell her I'll be there as soon as I finish smoking. No," after a slight consideration. "Never mind. I'll go now."

In the blue room, Mrs. Carrington Burnes, young, rather pretty, with a pouty sort of beauty, discernibly angry, was exhibiting her temper by a fretful tapping of the foot on the floor as she waited. From without there came the sound of music and the swishing rhythm of a waltz. A form showed in the doorway, and she looked up, closing her fan with a petulant little snap.

"I hope," she began, "that I didn't disturb you?"

"Not in the least," came the rather cynical rejoinder. "Is it anything important, or were you merely longing for company?"

"Neither. This is our dance."

"Certainly. What of it?"

"Oh, nothing. I was only wondering which you would rather do; enjoy your cigarette and leave me alone in there to be talked about by every kitten and every old cat here, or forego the

pleasure of your smoke for the sake of propriety."

The husband moved forward.

"You were?" he asked. "Sometimes the minds of the guilty move in strange channels, don't they?"

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Carrington Burnes asked, as she turned angrily.

"Merely a trifle," he assured her. "I made an effort to call your attention to the fact that this was our dance, but you were so very busily engaged with Mr. Phillips that you didn't hear me. And so—"

"Carr!"

"I matched two evils, cigarettes and women—and chose the lesser."

She rose, and started across the room.

"I won't listen to that," she exclaimed.

"I beg your pardon; that was almost sarcastic," he said quickly. "Let's make a truce. The dance is nearly over."

"For which," she answered coldly, "let us both give thanks. This is all we have together, isn't it—except the last? And, of course, we can let that go."

"Certainly."

In moving across the room, Mrs. Burnes had dropped her program. Her husband leaned forward, picked up the bit of vellum and gold, and, as he followed his wife to place it in her hands, his eyes scanned the names of those to whom she had given dances. Burnes

flushed angrily as he thrust the program forward.

"You dropped it," he volunteered. "Possibly I shouldn't have looked, but I did. Your Mr. Phillips is a very popular young man, it seems."

They met again when the music had ceased for the night, when the motor cars were chugging before the long awning to the street. Outside the limousine door all was pleasantness; inside they chose opposite positions on the softly upholstered seat, and sought a view of the darkened streets from different windows. For a long time there was silence, and then:

"Carr."

"Yes?"

"How much longer do you suppose this is going to last?"

"This existence?" he queried. "That depends. I haven't yet made up my mind what to do. Three things are possible, not one probable."

"And may I inquire——"

"There is divorce for one——"

The woman leaned forward eagerly.

"There is horsewhipping."

"Carr!"

"Or I might simply shoot him. But," as if in answer to the stifled little cry of the woman, "I am going to do none of the three. I have made up my mind that, love or no love, we will continue to live together and allow the world to believe that we are happy. I have absolutely determined that there shall be no scandal."

"And as usual," she sneered from her side of the limousine, "you have taken your own view of things as final. Carr, I have something to say about all this, and I have come to a conclusion of my own."

"And that is?"

"A divorce. If you will not get one, then I will."

"Then you do love him?"

"I do not. I never shall. I don't love any one. I don't want to love any one. I——"

The man laughed coldly.

"Helen," he said, "all that is very dramatic and very pretty, but it has one fault—the lack of truth. In the first

place, you are not going to get a divorce, for I propose to fight it at every step. And in the second place——"

"Well?"

"Were you to get that divorce, it would only be to go to Phillips."

Mrs. Burnes turned hastily.

"That merely goes to show your excess of stupid selfishness," she exclaimed. "You have been preaching of a scandal and its results. Do you recognize the fact, that if I sue, the scandal will come, anyway, no matter which of us wins? Carr, I am through, absolutely, finally through. I have made up my mind that I am going to end this thing we have called married life for the last three years. You are thirty; I am twenty-five. What pleasure have we had? None, unless you call what is going on now enjoyment."

"Compared to some of our little tête-à-têtes, it is," was the answer. "But, Helen, let's be frank with each other. I have said I intended to fight, and I shall. Why not be equally frank, and admit that a man has caused this?"

"Because he hasn't. You say I love Mr. Phillips, and you are wrong. I have turned to him simply as an amusement, as a means toward making me forget—for a while at least. When you and I have parted, perhaps I may find some one I really love. I don't know. But I am sure that it will not be the present object of your jealousy, so calm yourself. As to the divorce, I have made up my mind. I am going to start to-morrow—to Reno."

"To-morrow?" Burnes' jaw dropped.

"Exactly. If you care to fight it, you may follow at any time you desire."

The automobile swerved, and turned up the driveway of the place that had been their home for three years.

"No," Burnes said, as the machine came to a stop, "I am not going to follow. You and I are to remain married until we are separated by the courts. I am going along, on the same train!"

Three days later, a grinding, struggling train was still winding around the mountains of Colorado, on a trip upward, begun some time early that morning. Back in the Pullman, the eyes of

Mrs. Carrington Burnes were raised from her book toward the window, and then wearily dropped again.

She did not look across the aisle to where a rather young man was apparently absorbed in reading a paper already comparatively ancient, and which had been read and reread many times in the journey. Mrs. Burnes did not look, for the simple reason that she knew he was there, even though they had not spoken in the three days. She did not care to look, for she was desirous of forgetting the very fact of his existence.

Again she turned her eyes to the window, to see still the same red walls, the same ridges of pine trees, the same great, crowded boulders, and the same white peaks in the distance. It all bored her inexpressibly. Everything bored her, and especially he who sat across the aisle.

Tunnels interfered at every moment she composed herself, and found some really interesting part of the book before her. A news butcher passed through the car, endeavoring to sell picture post cards of the "beautiful scenes along the way."

Mrs. Burnes bit her lips, and rang for the porter.

"How much more of this is there?" she asked.

"De mount'ins? Laws!" And the porter grinned. "A lot. We'se jes' git-tin' to de top o' de range."

None of which was comforting. Those mountains grew still more irksome. The book lost whatever interest it might have held, and was allowed to fall to the floor. Across the aisle, Mr. Burnes stretched his feet upon the seat in front of him, and, laying his head back against the cushion, began to whistle. It grated on the ears of his nervous wife. Once she started from her seat as if to ask him to desist—and then decided otherwise. He appeared comfortable, and she hated him for it. He even seemed to be enjoying himself as much as he ever did relax in that phase of life, and she hated him worse than ever.

An hour passed, and things did not

improve. Instead, they grew worse, with more smoke, more cinders, more cañons and hills and peaks and mountains, and more whistling. Several times Mrs. Burnes clenched her hands as she stifled an almost overwhelming desire to scream forth her nervousness. The altitude, too, was affecting her. The blood vessels in her head began to stand forth, and a heavy ache found a haven in her temples. But he, across the aisle, was still leaning his head comfortably back, his feet still on the seat in front of him, his mouth still drawn up in that whistling pucker.

"Redd-d-d Clif-f-f!"

The train had stopped, and Mrs. Burnes looked out of the window again to see a small bit of a town, perched slantwise upon a mountainside. A few houses, a store or two, a hotel—that was all. She looked across the aisle. He had not moved, he had not stopped whistling. Suddenly there came a determination into the mind of the woman. She reached under the seat, grasped her small traveling bag, and walked to the rear of the train.

Burnes, out of the corner of his eye, saw her leave, but he did not see what she carried. He smiled, half to himself, and then turned back to his slothful position, to await the start of the train and her return to the compartment. In a moment the train did start, but a turn of the head revealed no form in the aisle. Burnes leaped to his feet, and looked at the observation platform. It was empty. Casting his glance still farther, he saw, hurrying up the one street of the town, the woman for whom he sought.

It took little time for Burnes to make up his mind. A hasty return to the seat, a hurried snatch for his suit case, and he started for the rear platform on a run. The process of leaving was not difficult, for the train was again making its way up one of those heavy grades against which it had fought all the forenoon. Burnes climbed over the brass railing, swung far out, and then dropped.

Burnes soon overtook his wife, who turned with an expression of impa-

tience. For a moment neither spoke; they only stood, luggage in hand, looking into each other's eyes. A few loafers, on the store steps, looked up from their whistling, spat in an inquisitive manner, and went through mental speculations as to the newcomers, their status, their destination, and their mission; for even tourists were few in Red Cliff. It was Carrington Burnes who finally broke the silence of three days.

"Why here?" he asked. "Why not Colorado Springs—or some pleasant place?"

"It suits me very well," she answered, with a toss of her head; "at least it did. Of course you realize that I didn't stop here just to see the sights."

"Certainly not," Mr. Burnes interjected rather snappily. "You left the train to be rid of me, and I left it for the simple reason that I don't intend to be gotten rid of."

"That is evident," curtly.

By this time, idle curiosity on the part of the town loafers had turned to staring concern as the two still stood motionless on the rough plank walk, talking earnestly, but without a sign of geniality and without a smile. Burnes noticed the stares, and moved quickly toward his wife.

"Helen," he said, "we're making a show of ourselves. Just for the sake of things in general, let me have your bag."

"No, thank you; I can carry it."

Then, if this sort of thing must go on—and I suppose that is inevitable—let's go where, at least, we won't be looked on as a circus. Is there a hotel here?"

They had started walking up the street, and at the question Mrs. Burnes raised her head petulantly.

"How should I know?" she asked. "I have been here no longer than you have."

"It makes no difference, anyway," Burnes said. "Helen, give me that bag just a moment."

This time she handed him the traveling case with a bit of a question in her eyes that was not answered in words. In action, however, Mr. Burnes

supplemented his question by diving into a small drug store and emerging with neither her bag nor his.

"Now," when he joined his wife, "that we're rid of the impedimenta, we can proceed to other things."

The store which Burnes had used as a baggage station was nearly at the end of the one narrow, gravel-strewn street which formed the main thoroughfare of Red Cliff. Not more than a hundred yards away, the slight plateau, which afforded an excuse for the little mountain village, began to drop sheerly away in a series of reddish, igneous precipices. On to the west, the street soon developed into a fairly well-worn trail, leading into a cañon, above which rose mountain peak upon mountain peak.

Burnes gazed upward, at the ridges of pine trees, at the great, massed boulders, at the little stream which tumbled down the mountainside and flowed turbulently beneath a rustic bridge not fifty feet away. He, like Mrs. Burnes, was having his first real touch of the mountains. True, they had spent summers within view of them at Colorado Springs.

Yes, both Mr. and Mrs. Burnes had been sure they had seen the mountains. Indeed, they had seen them, but they had not investigated, for reasons that were readily apparent in their style of life. To investigate meant fatigue, sunburn, dirtiness, gravel in the shoes—but why continue all the lengthy description? Mr. and Mrs. Burnes had both witnessed many a mountain-stained tourist limping into the lobby of their hotel in Colorado Springs, and really they were dreadfully horrid in appearance, almost beastly, one might say.

But, as they stood at the end of the little street, a bit of the grandeur of the scene began to find its way past the eyes of Carrington Burnes and into his brain. He began, gradually of course, to see that the solid red walls, the needlelike spire, and the giant boulders were something more than mere blotches on the face of nature. The waterfall, in the distance, too, for the

first time seemed to catch the rays of the sun and carry downward a living rainbow. The cloud, hovering about the top of the nearest peak, seemed to take on chameleonlike colors as he watched, and then suddenly dissolved into nothingness. The cedars, which always had borne only a deadish, blue tinge when he saw them from a distance, were really green, and pretty, and vibrant with life.

Burnes turned suddenly to see the effect of it upon his wife. But her eyes were dull, and she was shading them with her hand as she gazed idly down the street, swinging slowly around, however, when he addressed her.

"How should I know?" she snapped, when asked her plans. "I certainly shall not register at any hotel as long as you are with me. Since you are so set on remaining by my side, I suppose I must do the only logical thing—wait for the next train, and continue my journey."

As she spoke, the mountains lost their beauty, their grandeur for Burnes. Now he saw in them only a means to the carrying out of a spiteful, malicious plan that had quickly sprouted, blossomed, and borne fruit within his brain. He suddenly found himself imbued with hatred for those indolent, brown, heavily lashed eyes before him. He craved to see them deadened from real fatigue, and changed from indolence to dull suffering. He stepped closer.

"Listen, Helen," he urged, "I want to talk to you about things. Won't you listen, just for this afternoon? Come, here's a path that leads up there between those rocks; perhaps it's cooler there. Go there with me; we'll talk things over for the last time. Then, if you are still determined, you may go your way, and I'll go mine, and I'll not bother you any more. You'll be free to do as you choose then. Won't you come?"

Her eyes brightened at this.

"You mean that?" she asked. "That you'll not follow me?"

"I am sincere, Helen."

"Then, I will come."

There were the same old arguments,

the same threats, the same cajoleries, as he led her into the cañon; conveniences of speech merely to fill the space of time, to lure her on, farther up the rock-strewn trail, on to his impetuous desire for a trivial revenge. The cañon was reached and passed. It was not cool there, after all, and Burnes saw, just a bit farther up, a spot that looked inviting. The allurements of his withdrawal was again held forth, and again she allowed herself to be led on.

The little stream was crossed on stepping-stones, the trail divided, and then divided again. Red Cliff was hidden, but still there came from the lips of Burnes no pleadings, nothing but sarcasm and pointed thrusts of jealousy. And on her side there was no better. Mr. and Mrs. Carrington Burnes, brought up in their own narrow world, were well matched, for the fact that in marrying and being unhappy, they saved unhappiness for some other persons in the world who might have been their respective husband and wife.

It all had continued for an hour when Mrs. Burnes stopped.

"Don't you think we've had enough of this?" she asked candidly. "For my part, I have. My mind is made up. Now, I want to go back."

He frowned a moment, and then smiled broadly.

"Certainly, if you wish it. But I am afraid that will be rather difficult. I've been trying to find the way back for the last fifteen minutes without result. We are——"

A frightened cry came from the lips of Mrs. Burnes.

"Lost?" she gasped.

"Exactly," said the husband dryly.

"We can't be—why, we've been gone no time—shout—can't you do something to attract attention?"

"Shout?" the husband intervened. "Who would hear us? We've been gone from Red Cliff an hour!"

"But——"

"Absolutely useless," he interjected, without waiting for the suggestion. "We've got to fish for it. Maybe we can find the trail—maybe not. Come on. We'll go this way."

Then, carefully leading the way in the opposite direction from the trail he knew led to Red Cliff, Burnes plunged into the mountains with his wife behind. A strange little light of satisfaction glowed in his eyes, a feeling of exultation tugged at his heart. She could get her divorce, she could be free to go where and with whom she chose, but before that he would at least have his revenge.

For another hour he compelled her to follow him wherever his fancy chose, taking a queer sort of delight in her exclamations of fright as they became buried deeper and deeper in the mountains, laughing to himself as he led the way up the tortuous paths, now leaving the little burro trails behind, now coming back to them.

Where the underbrush was thickest, there he led the way, for he knew that the branches and twigs would tear her clothing and scratch her skin. Where the boulders and stones were many, there he hastened brutally, with mental calculations of the sharp incisions they would make in her dainty shoes, of the bruises they would cause. Carrington Burnes had passed beyond the primeval into the brute. Yes, she could get her divorce, but he would have something to look back upon!

He found a trail that led upward, over gigantic boulders, across patches of blackness, branch-strewn places, where a forest fire had made its mark the year before. That he chose, looking over his shoulder now and then to assure himself that she was there.

"Carr," she panted, "surely this is wrong. We should be going down, not up, to reach Red Cliff."

He stopped and turned roughly.

"If you think you can find the way any better than I can," he said brutally, "go ahead, and do it."

She stopped, and looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"Please," she pleaded, "don't talk to me like that. It—it was only a suggestion. I didn't mean—"

Perhaps it was that speech which found its way through the armor he had welded over his heart. Perhaps,

too, it was a glance at the sun, which, in a glory of red, was rapidly nearing its resting place for the night. Burnes veered in his route with a hurried "Come on," and started in another direction. Just beyond the big boulder was the trail which led back to Red Cliff. He had had his revenge, and now he was satisfied.

But the trail was not just behind the big boulder. Nor was it to the right nor to the left. Beads of perspiration began to break out on the brow of Carrington Burnes, and fear, such as he had sent into the heart of his wife, began to find its way into his own. He tried again and again, but failed to find that elusive trail, the location of which he had felt so sure of keeping in his mind. Then he laughed, for through the whispering trees he heard the sound of a stream—a guidepost he had been certain of—away over to the right.

"Come on," he said. "I believe I've got it."

"The way back to town? Carr, I hope so."

"Let's hurry, Helen; it's getting late."

Over the boulders, through clumps of little bushes, and over the trunks of dead trees, they hurried toward the sound which soon trebled in strength, and rose to a gigantic roar. It was a stream, true, but where had Burnes remembered a waterfall of a sheer two hundred feet? He stopped abruptly at the bank, and, looking a few feet farther on, watched the tumbling water as it shot over the edge of the cliff. That was not the stream he had known, and another guidepost had tottered. The face of Carrington Burnes changed to frank dismay.

"Helen," he said slowly; "we're lost!"

She laughed a bit at this, the laugh of nervous exhaustion, and sat down on the trunk of a fallen pine.

"That's no new discovery, is it?" she asked. "We've been in that condition for most of the afternoon."

Burnes did not answer. Instead, placing his hands trumpetlike to his

mouth, he drew his every ounce of power into his lungs, and then:

"Hello-o-o!"

A second intervened, and then, from across a seemingly endless expanse, there came:

"Hello-o-o!"

"Listen!" exclaimed the wife, as she left her seat on the tree trunk. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes," Burnes answered excitedly. "Some one heard us. It's from over there that——"

The sentence was not finished, for from the west, from the peak on the east, from the north and south, there rolled into their ears reverberating cries of the one shouted word, cries which grew in strength and thundered, cries which faded and drifted away into emptiness. Carrington Burnes allowed his arms to drop to his sides in despondency.

"Echoes," he said slowly. "Only echoes."

This time it was she who did not answer. Burnes, turning, saw the reason, and hastened to her side. She was swaying on the tree trunk, and in another second she had fallen fainting in his arms. A little cry escaped the lips of the husband, and his face became one of suffering. He was beginning to see his brutality of the afternoon, to see his lack of consideration, his selfishness. Something akin to daggers began to pierce his heart. He leaned forward, stroked the wayward hair from the temples, and kissed the closed eyes. Then, laying her gently on the ground, he hurried to the stream for water.

The eyes of the woman slowly opened as Burnes dashed the cooling fluid from his cupped hands into her face. Then he raised her tenderly from the ground, and her returning consciousness found his face nearer hers than it had been in several years.

"Helen," he was saying, "I've been a fool this afternoon, a brute. I'm sorry for it, I'm——"

"Why, Carr——"

"I mean it; I've been a deliberate brute. We weren't lost when I first told you. I was angry then; I was be-

side myself. I wanted revenge against you because you were going to get a divorce. I led you off up here to tire you out, to frighten you, to hurt you, thinking I could find the way back. Now, I can't do it. Helen, I've been a brute; I know it, and I'm sorry—sorry—sorry!"

"Are you sure that there's no way back?"

"Not that I can find. Night's coming on. If we started now, one of us might be killed, at least injured through some fall. There's only one thing to do—wait till morning. Oh, Helen," he cried, in an excess of bitterness, "can you ever forgive me for this? I shouldn't ask it! It was mean, cowardly in me, unmanly!"

She seemed not to hear him.

"But in the morning——" she began.

"I think I can find the way back. I'll do all I can to make things as easy as possible for you. I'll carry you if I can. Then, if we get back, you can go away, unmolested. You can have anything you want, choose any path you desire, take any steps you care to. I am ashamed of myself for this afternoon, Helen, ashamed of myself!"

"Let's wait until we get back before we talk of that," the wife answered. Then she looked long at her husband, and made a surprising statement. "Carr," she said, "I'm hungry enough to eat shoe leather!"

It brought the situation even more keenly to the mind of Burnes, and he turned away, inwardly cursing himself for his foolishness, for his temper. A little mountain squirrel, playing about the foot of a tree, not more than ten feet away, scampered halfway up, and then gave a saucy look over his shoulder.

It angered Burnes. He reached forward, seized a stone, and with all his strength threw it at the little animal. Then he jumped to his feet with a shout of triumph. Wholly unexpected, the aim had been true, the stone had struck its mark, the squirrel lay at the foot of the tree kicking out the last bit of an expiring existence.

"Helen!" Burnes cried, as he leaped

forward, picked up the squirrel by its bushy tail, and held it triumphantly before his wife. "Look at that! How was that for a shot? Hungry? Well, we'll soon see about that."

Mrs. Burnes looked up with a little laugh.

"But"—and here she hesitated—"is the thing good to eat?"

"Good to eat?" came enthusiastically from the husband. "Why, they topped the menu at the Springs last year. Don't you remember? I know," he said wisely, "because the waiter described them to me once, just as they are here in the mountains. Helen, you never did any cooking, did you?"

"I should say not. But there's nothing like learning, is there, Carr? Do you know, I've come to a wonderful conclusion here in the last few minutes."

"Let's see; the first thing's a fire, isn't it?" Burnes was saying, half to himself, as he got down on his knees and began to gather twigs, and leaves, and pine cones. "Oh, beg pardon, Helen. What's your conclusion?"

"Simply that the stomach rules the body a great deal more than the mind does. Here, let me help you. Will these little round things burn?" she asked, as she gathered some cones into a pile.

"I guess so. We can try them, anyway. I tell you, you get the stuff for the fire together, and I'll try to fix this squirrel for cooking. Say," he asked very seriously, as he balanced the body of the little animal on his hand, "do you pick these things—or skin them?"

"I'll give up," she answered laughingly, as she swept more pine cones into the pile. "You're the chef. I'm only the fire keeper. Why, Carr—"

"What?"

"How on earth are we going to cook that thing, after we get it fixed?"

"Lord," he answered, as he started toward the stream, "I don't know. We'll *have* to invent some way, or I'll be tempted to eat it raw. Goodness, but I'm hungry!"

"And so am I," Mrs. Burnes answered, with emphasis.

In a second he was back from the stream, enthusiasm showing in his face.

"I've got an idea," he said. "Wasn't there something in a book once about cooking meat over a fire with forked sticks?"

"Where's the squirrel?"

Both hands went into the air.

"I left it in the stream!"

"Carr! And it will be washed away!"

There was a race for the stream, just in time for a thrilling rescue of the food supply as it lodged for a few seconds against a small rock before starting over the falls. That accomplished, Mrs. Burnes went back to her fuel gathering, and on the way stopped a bit in an open space to gaze in wonder at the scene which met her eyes.

"Carr!" she called. "Come here—quick! Don't forget the squirrel."

In a moment he was by her side, the squirrel, half skinned, stretched out in his hand.

"Look!" she said simply.

Before them was the sunset, glorious, dazzling. The myriad colors, playing against the sky, seemed to set forth the mountains in the foreground more acutely, silhouetting their peaks in sharp, contrasting clearness, while lower, in a fondling embrace, floated a bluish purple haze that seemed almost tender in its loveliness.

For a full moment, the pair stood there, wordless. Something entered the heart of Burnes, a tempting something which caused a great desire to put his arm about the waist of the woman who stood by his side. Evidently that something had found its way into her heart also, for their arms started outward simultaneously—and then, as their fingers touched, were drawn back again. They remembered that they were about to be divorced. An awkward silence followed, broken finally by Burnes.

"It's queer we never saw that before, as much as we've been in the Springs," he said.

"It is, isn't it?" the wife assented. "But here, Carr, the first thing we

know, it will be dark. And I'm still hungry."

"So'm I," he agreed, as he hastened again to the stream.

In fifteen minutes a man and a woman were learning that pine cones really could burn, and that they made a wonderfully hot and pleasantly aromatic fire. Burnes, with a pocket knife he had used in preparing the squirrel, snipped the ends from several forked twigs, and stuck the points into the tender flesh. Then, side by side, they settled down to the cooking of the evening meal—their first attempt at domesticity.

"Do you really think it will be good?" Helen asked, in a manner that showed reverence for the opinion of her husband.

"What do you think?" was the question in answer that came with a like inflection of the voice.

"I don't know."

"Neither do I."

"You've got to try it first."

"All right."

Then, as Burnes prodded deep into the meat with his pocket knife, he held the stick far away from the fire a moment, and then sampled the flesh at the end.

"Well?"

It was the inquiring voice of his wife, and Burnes looked up, his mouth extremely full.

"Sgood," he said.

"Um-hum," came a few seconds later, as the woman, too, bit into the juicy flesh. "Say, Carr, what do you suppose those little red berries are on that bush over there?"

Burnes followed her direction with his eyes, then handed his bit of squirrel into the keeping of the wife, and walked to a thorny bit of brier a few feet away. He picked one of the berries, lifted it gingerly to his lips, and then whooped.

"Helen!" he shouted. "Throw me my hat. Red raspberries!"

The sunset changed to twilight, and with the transition cooling, sweet breezes floated over the mountain top. The meal over, husband and wife drew

nearer the fire, and once, when their shoulders touched, they did not draw them away.

"I wonder," Mrs. Burnes queried, as she idly threw more pine cones on the fire, "if it will get very cold up here to-night."

"Chilly?" he asked quickly. "Here!"

Then, before he really knew what he was doing, he had taken off his coat and thrown it about the shoulders of the other. In another moment, he was on his feet and walking away into the grayness of the evening. The rather frightened voice of the woman followed him.

"I'll be back in a minute," he called. "Make yourself comfortable."

But it was more than a minute before Burnes returned. To tell the truth, twilight had nearly vanished before he again came into the firelight, and, sitting down, looked at his wife with a laugh in his eyes.

"I've been house hunting," he volunteered.

"House hunting?"

"Why, certainly. This old mountain is as good as a hotel. It has every convenience. Now, should we happen to get cold or sleepy, you know, well, the bed's of leaves, but there's plenty of protection from the wind, or rain, or anything else that's liable to bob up. You'd be surprised how cozy it is."

"Why, Carr, what on earth are you talking about?"

"About our bed. I'll take you over there after a while. It's just underneath a great, big cleft in the rocks, and it's as warm in there as it is in a steam-heated room. I just stumbled into it, and so——"

"Aren't we lucky?" The exclamation of Mrs. Burnes was fraught with an enthusiasm she never had known could exist in her.

"I should say we are," he answered just as heartily. "I put a lot of dried leaves in there, and, when we get ready to go to sleep, you can roll up my coat for a pillow and——"

"I'll do nothing of the kind."

"Well, you will."

"Well, I won't. You're just as tired as I am, and besides——"

"Now, Helen, if I ask you to use my coat, won't you please? Let's don't get to fussing again."

Suddenly Burnes burst into a great laugh, and rolled over on his back.

"Of all things, that you and I should ever come to the point of quarreling about doing something for each other!" he exclaimed. "Oh, Helen—look!"

"Why, what?"

"The stars! Did you ever see them so bright—and so close? Why, they just seem to be hanging on the top of the trees—like Christmas candles, don't they?" Then his voice grew serious. "I wonder where we'll be to-morrow," he mused. "Do you know, Helen, I believe that if we'd always lived up in the mountains like this, there never would have been any trouble."

"What makes you think that, Carr?" the woman asked, gazing intently into the fire.

"Hasn't to-night been enough to teach us? We, ourselves, have not wrecked our happiness; it has been the mode of life we have led. Do you realize that to-day was the first we had ever spent in any sort of a natural way? It has always been the unnatural which has held us—the city, dances, receptions, gossip, the indoors, and the opposite of what persons should really have in their souls to make them good men and women. Humph," he added, with emphasis, "come to think of it, I wonder how we stood it as long as we did. But it's the truth, Helen, we have led unnatural lives, you and I. We have gone at life in the wrong way. It has made us see only ourselves, it has made us selfish in our own amusements, it has made us lose sight of each other. No wonder we quarreled, and bickered, and found no pleasure in each other's company! Oh, it's all right, once in a while, but we never had anything else. It was the steady diet of society that hurt us, Helen. Don't you think so?"

Mrs. Burnes was still looking into the fire. She turned as her husband stopped speaking, and parted her lips

to answer him. Suddenly, however, the forthcoming words were cut off by a sound which brought them both to their feet, their eyes straining into the darkness. From around the side of the mountain, there came a great sound of snorting and of puffing. Slowly it progressed upward, becoming louder, more straining, at every moment. Then, not more than a hundred feet away, they saw a great column of smoke ascending upward in the night, obscuring the stars, and passing on again.

Burnes seized his wife by the arm.

"It's the railroad!" he gasped. "The track's not more than a hundred feet. We can follow it down and get back to Red Cliff. Are you strong enough?"

"Now?" she asked, turning.

"Why, yes, we can take it slowly, you know—and I could help you a lot."

A shooting flame of the fire showed a look of perplexity on the face of Mrs. Carrington Burnes.

"Won't we be able to do it better in the morning?" she asked.

"Why—why, yes. But that early train, you know. I think it must come through here about four o'clock, and I was thinking—that is—Helen," he exclaimed suddenly, "you know that I don't want you to go. I think that we've both found out now—but——"

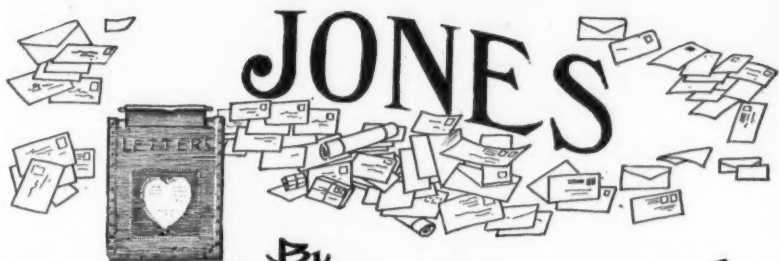
"Come on," Mrs. Burnes said, laughing softly. "I'm chilly. Let's sit down again."

Above her, her husband looked down in wonder.

"But did you hear me this evening," he asked, "when I told you how I had brought you-up here, and how I acted the brute? Helen, even you cannot know how sorry I am for it. But, you see—well, I can't ask you to forgive me—I even loathe myself for it—and so if you really want to go——"

"Do you know," she said, "a little bungalow up here would be mighty nice in the summer, only don't you think we'd want it a little bit farther from the railroad, because——"

"By George, Helen," said Mr. Burnes, a trifle huskily, "I've been thinking about that all evening!"



Carrington Phelps

I NEVER liked the name from the first, nor have I ever been able to entirely reconcile myself to it, despite the matter of fact that it was the name my parents bore. "Jones" has ever impressed me as being a terribly unromantic word, a flat word, devoid of imagination, of personality, of passion. And I have always felt that it was due only to the uncontrollable impulse within me that I became a poet. For otherwise my name would have suggested to me, and perhaps impelled me toward, an humbler occupation, such as banking or haberdashery, or even clerking.

But the most maddening thing of all is the perfectly fatuous manner in which my mail and that of the other Joneses in the neighborhood become mixed. One Jones, an ex-missionary, lives on the corner. Another, a doctor, lives two doors west; while a third, a seamstress, occupies the very same house that I do. It always gives me a shock to find in my mail box a letter addressed to "Mrs. Jones"; and I feel for an instant as though it had actually happened—marriage, commuting, babies, and all—which is perfectly natural, I think, in so confirmed an old bachelor as myself.

Also, I detest receiving sewing-machine calendars, and tracts on cannibal salvation, and medicine advertisements, intended for other Joneses. Of course, much of this miscarriage is caused by improper or insufficient addressing.

Only this morning I suggested to the widowed seamstress—I presume she is a widow, because she is always in black and veiled—that she have her entire name placed upon her mail, just as it is upon the card on her door. She colored, and said she wished I would tell the postman to be more careful; but that it didn't matter much because she was moving away to-day, anyhow.

They seem to think that moving will solve the problem. Last Wednesday, I very decently requested Doctor Jones to have his letters more carefully addressed; and he told me coarsely that, if I did not like the way his mail was addressed, I had better move away. I cannot expect the missionary to do much about it, because his Christian names are Alexander Napoleon Trotwell. At least, they come that way on his Baptist *Clarion*.

I suppose the main cause of all the trouble is with the postmen. There are three of them; but I have noted that the mistakes are invariably due to one in particular. He is a squat, yellow-haired person of uncertain age; and, to cap the climax, his name is Jones.

And, when I found another *Clarion* awaiting me to-day, I decided to interview that postman. He usually brings the four-o'clock mail; but, when I went out at that hour to look for him, he was not in sight. So I walked down the street to meet him.

It occurred to me that a postman was rather a romantic figure, despite the in-

difference with which we are accustomed to view him. He is so unfailing and reliable that we have long ago ceased to realize his importance, and would not until he stopped, as we do when one's heart ceases to beat. He is a sort of modern jinni, who, with his trilly, snuffly whistle, brings about all kinds of joys and happiness, of misery, and fear, and hates and loves to all people, from kings to sweepers; in all places, from hovel to palace. He is inexorable as fate, and as inevitable.

Musing in this vein, I had walked a considerable distance, and had even blocked out a quatrain or two, when I almost collided with the object of my search. I asked him if he did not feel at times his vast responsibility in bringing sorrow and gladness, in settling so flippantly, so carelessly, the vital affairs of human life.

"No," he replied vaguely, shifting his shoulder strap; "but it gets terrible heavy at times."

You see, he had no conception of the delicacy or the subtle potency of his work. But then he had never been molded to appreciate delicacy. In point of fact, you would think, to see him trundling up the street, that it was some sort of ambulatory pumpkin that approached, wearing for a head a little brother pumpkin, which I affected, in his turn, a little gray cap instead of the stub he had grown from. For his face is round, red, and expressionless. He is the living epitome of all that is dreary, commonplace, and inartistic.

"You an author?" he asked suddenly.

I said I was a poet. He paused, grubbed about in his bag, and produced three envelopes, which I recognized at once as containing the last three poems I had submitted.

"I thought so," he commented. "I always bring you a lotta writings—back."

I suspected for an instant that he grinned impudently; but it was merely the sun in his eyes.

"You know," he continued, "I gotta story that would make a great book. I know it would. Only I don't know how to put it into writing. I've thought of

writing it some day, but you know how it is. I keep putting it off, and never get to it."

And thereupon he insisted on retailing to me the chief episodes in what he was pleased to designate as "a great book." It was merely a repetition of the usual "great book" so many imagine they possess, "if they could only write"; and it was slightly less original than the effort of the average schoolgirl. Most of it he had made up; a very little he admitted was from actual experience. There was only one bit that interested me; and presently I asked him if the part about the girl who never came back was true. His face did not change perceptibly, because physically it could not; but his voice seemed a trifle gruffer when he told me that it was true, but that he never talked about it much.

"But that other now," he persisted. "Don't you think yourself it would make a great book? You know I read a lot, and I think it's better lots of 'em."

I agreed with him, suggesting that it might make the Great American Novel, and—harked back to the girl. He answered in monosyllables, evidently thinking to himself. He had liked her, he said. He had never wanted any other woman. That was a long time ago. Then he fell silent, sorting out a fresh lot of mail, apparently oblivious of my existence.

Suddenly, "You ever been in Connecticut?" he asked.

I said that I had, and suggested persuasively that it was a fine State.

"I was born there," he continued, "thirty-five years ago."

Again silence, relieved only by the ringing of two bells and the delivery of a black-bordered envelope through a basement window. I whistled negligently, and he came out of his glassy-eyed rumination.

"Thirty-five years ago," he repeated. "You know time goes fast once you begin to notice it. Don't it? When I was a kid I never noticed it. When I got older I did, though. I grew up in the Berkshire country. Ever live there?"

He flung the question over his shoul-

der as he stooped to hand a parcel to a waiting maid.

I said I had not, that my home was in the South.

"Huh!" he ejaculated. "That's not living. It's a one-season country down there, flat like, summer just like winter. Now, up where I come from, every week it's different weather, and you gotta know something to know what's coming next. Gee, I wisht I could live up there!"

"Why don't you?" I asked.

He made no answer, but shuffled with pudgy fingers a fresh batch of mail, as if he were about to embark on some grotesque game of solitaire. We crossed the street silently, and in step.

"Mebbe I will some day," he said abruptly. "But I don't think so—I don't know," he half mused. "You can't tell now—might be I'd go back soon—to-morrow—and might be never."

This was cryptic, and I told him so; and then I asked him why.

"Oh, on account of a kid." Another silence. "On account of a kid I used to know." He shot a glance at me. "That was years ago. Those things don't matter much now."

"Sometimes they matter most of all," I said.

"Yes." He spoke almost eagerly. "They do that, don't they? But most folks don't know it, do they?"

"Not always. Tell me—what about the kid?"

"Oh, nothing much. I'd as lief tell you, though, if you wanta know."

He began to talk, hesitatingly at first, for he had never spoken of it to any one before, and diverted somewhat by the details of his work. But once the seal was fairly broken, he talked straight on, oblivious and feverishly, strong with the reaction from so long and close a silence.

"I went to school," he began, "at the Rock Schoolhouse; the one with the big split rock behind it, big as itself. Ever see it?"

I said I had not.

"Well, you oughta see that country. It's all mountains, and rocks, and valleys, and brooks. Ain't nothing pret-

tier in York State. I was born and raised there. Most of the boys helped their folks farm it; but father, he had a blacksmith shop, and I just helped around. And ever since I can remember there was the kid. We used to play together just like two *regular* kids. Used to go sliding down Pike's Hill in the wintertime together, and skating on Blue Pond, and fish through the ice, and trap rabbits. And summers we'd play hooky, and go fishing in the dam for suckers, and swipe melons.

"And when I got in fights, she used to help me, and I always liked her. She was just like a feller. We used to fight, too, 'cause she had an awful temper, headstrong, and self-willed. Once I washed her face in snow, and some sand in it scratched her, and she laid open my head with a sled stake.

"She got that from her father, old Drummle. He was the town drunkard, hard cider, you know, and meaner'n all get-out. That kind always are. He wouldn't work, and her mother did washing, and slaved and slaved so as to give her kid her chance, and sent her to school right along.

"She always studied hard, but I didn't; and she used to help me with my lessons. The other fellers used to make fun of me a lot about Rue; but I licked 'em, and they let me alone.

"And then she got long dresses, and wouldn't come fishing any more, and went to town to high school, and used to come home every week. I never went to high school. I had to get on the job and learn the trade in father's shop. It was pretty hard on her old lady, too, I guess, before the kid finished. And then it wasn't long before she was teaching in the little school-house herself.

"She just seemed to grow up all of a sudden. She was awful pretty, and dark, and quick, and smart, and ambitious, and awful proud. She sort of held herself above the rest of us, even if her mother did do washing and her father was the town drunkard. We used to be together a lot, though it wasn't like it used to be when we went sliding and fishing. I never made love

to her at all. Just liked to be with her. And it got to be sort of settled that we were keeping company; but I'd never said a word to her.

"I remember one Sunday morning when she had been away a week visiting. She came swinging into church, all fresh, and blooming, and confident; and all of a sudden I realized she was a grown-up, real woman, and that I wanted her. I sort of felt that I wasn't half good enough for her; but I couldn't help myself. I just wanted her, and I'd have died for her. The sun just rose and set in that kid for me. But I was terrible afraid of her; and I couldn't understand that, because I used to fight with her; but it shows the difference, don't it, when they grow up to be women?"

"I remember I used to write her love letters; but I never dared to give 'em to her, or even to put her name on 'em, lest somebody should find 'em and know. But it seemed as if I was happier after writing. I wrote one every day for a year or more; and then I made 'em into a sort of a book that I was going to give her after we were married. But Rue never saw them, not to this day."

He paused, breathing heavily, and mopped his forehead with a ridiculously small handkerchief. It was very hot, and the heat from the broiling sun was reflected upward from the gray pavement as from some monstrous hot griddle.

"You see," he went on, "I couldn't any more keep from loving her than I could fly. I guess that's what got to her and made her like me, for she couldn't help knowing I just belonged to her like a dog. She was kind to me, and I could see she didn't want to hurt me, though she was quick and hasty enough if she got started, just like she was with the sled stake, and nothing could stop her. Things went on that way for a year; and it got to be so we were together a lot of the time, and all the other fellers seemed to keep off, as if I was the only one for her.

"About that time father died. He'd been all crippled up with rheumatism for a couple of years, and it left me

alone down in the old house. I was making a good living, and I wanted her to marry me. One day I got up nerve enough to ask her, and she said yes. Gee, it was scary, though! And I never thought she'd say yes.

"So it was all arranged that we'd be married that fall. I remember I fixed up the old place fine that summer. There was a brook running by just behind it; and I made a little bridge across it, with seats in the middle, so you could sit and feed the trout. She was fond of flowers; and there was an old garden, sunk down, that hadn't been growing since it was made, a hundred years before; and I planted it fine, and ran pipes, and made a real fountain in the middle.

"It was quiet and peaceful there, with the big trees, and the sound of the brook, and the bees humming, and the old vines on the house, and lots of birds everywhere, and the big mountains running straight up behind it all. And she was pleased with it, but wouldn't ever more than look at it from the outside. Said she wanted to wait till it really and truly was hers.

"But that was all we ever had of the old house—just seeing it from the outside. That summer Mrs. Sanders took in boarders—there's lots of 'em doing it now—and one of 'em was a young chap named Steel, John Merrivale Steel. He was connected some way with a theater in New York City, and he came up in the country for his health. He didn't look sick, though, because he was a big, husky chap; but he said his nerves were bad. And the minute he set eyes on Rue, he was hit just the same as I was.

"We hadn't said anything about getting married yet to anybody; and he started right in calling on her, and bringing her candy and presents and all. She didn't seem to mind much; and I thought if she wanted it that way, why, all right. He was a pretty good-looking chap, and could talk smooth; and I could see that she liked him. He used to tell her right before them all that she was too smart to be wasting her time in the country, and that she'd make a big success in the theater.

"You know all that had an effect on her? I didn't realize it till later, but it did. She was high strung and headstrong as a young colt; and she wasn't made for a backwoods village, and I oughta known it. She wanted a chance to do something big in the world, I suppose; and she'd never had it. She was terrible ambitious. I guess the country got on her nerves some; and I guess I did, too. But she was square clean through; and all young Steel got for his pains was the news—from her, too—that we were going to be married soon.

"You know I honestly never thought a man was able to be such a snake as that chap was? He kept on playing his game right in the face of everything. He was just as pleasant as ever; pleasanter, if anything; and everybody said what a nice, friendly young feller he was, and forgiving. He fooled me, too. He fooled me more than any of 'em. For I thought he meant to be a friend, and liked Rue just as a friend would, specially after he knew she was promised. And I even showed him one of the presents I was going to give her when we were married—the big bundle of letters I'd written her when I first fell in love with her. He fooled me, all right enough. Right up to the day of the wedding.

"I remember we were married in the morning, at the church, and she never looked so pretty. And, after it was over, we were going on a wedding trip to Boston and back, and I'd even bought the tickets, and had the places picked out we were going to visit, and all. After the ceremony, she went down to her mother's to change her clothes, and I went over to get the Perkins' horse and buggy that we were going in to the depot.

"And when I got there, old Johnnie Perkins said young Steel had just drove away, saying he was going to bring the bride up to my place, and for me to wait there. I thought it was kind of fresh, but I waited for an hour, and then I went over, 'cross lots, to Mrs. Drummle's. She said young Steel had called while Rue was changing her dress, and Rue had got in with him,

and he'd called back he was going to take her up to me.

"I went back to my place, but they weren't there; and I went down through the village, but they hadn't gone past; and then I went back to her mother's, and just this side, at the fork of the road, I saw where buggy wheels had turned sharp; and the hoof marks showed he was galloping. Then I began to get scared, and started down the brook road on the run. I came to the Simons' place, and I saw May Simons on the porch; and I saw the way she looked at me that she'd seen them.

"'Where'd they go?' I asked; and she just pointed south.

"'Was he *holding* her?'

"'No,' said May, 'she was looking back every little.'

"I don't know what happened next; but I got dizzy and weak all over—sick. I borrowed the Simons' horse and rig, and half killed him chasing them. They had a big start on me, maybe an hour, so I couldn't catch them. I lost the tracks down toward Colebrook River, and the horse broke down, and I got out and tried to trail them afoot; but it wasn't any use.

"I didn't get home till morning, and by then everybody knew. None of them dared speak to me about it; and, if they had, I wouldn't have heard them. I sent telegrams, and tried to have them stopped, but it wasn't any use.

"That night I got a letter from her, and then I knew what the snake had done. It was just a little, short letter, telling me I had been deceiving her all the time, and that she couldn't face the shame and disgrace of it. It said she knew the truth, and she inclosed the proofs. They were three of the letters I'd written to her, and was part of the present I was going to give her of the whole lot. That whelp had stole them out of the bunch, and showed them to her when he came with the buggy, and told her they were written to another girl just the other day.

"I could just see her when he gave them to her, half crazy from being so hurt, and ashamed, and fooled, and then jumping right at the nearest and quick-

est thing to get back with, like she did with the sled stake. I could see easy how she did it. But, all the same, when I realized what had happened, I went clean crazy myself. They told me I acted like a wild man. But after a while I cooled down, because I knew what I was going to do. I was going to kill him with my hands. I knew where to find him from the name of the theater he worked in.

"I took what money I'd saved, and, after I'd locked up everything, and arranged to have the pig and the chickens fed every day, I started for New York. Well, I've been here ever since. He never had worked at that theater; but I found out he was pretty well known at other theaters as a ticket seller, and one night I located him. I didn't hurry, though. I had plenty of time. I just walked up to the window, and said: 'Good evening, Mister Steel,' polite like; and he went green, and choked, and reached back quick.

"But I passed on; and, because I knew he'd be watching, I let him go when he came out, and followed him. He kept looking around on all sides, and finally he went into a saloon. I watched him through the window. He came out after a while; and he showed he'd been drinking too much. I followed him around to a couple of more saloons; and then he went to a house and let himself in with a key. I didn't want to get him when he was drunk, so I waited across the street until morning. And then I saw there was a little card marked 'Rooms to let' on the house; and I went over and asked for a room.

"The woman showed me one on the top floor, and I took it. I told her Mister Steel had recommended it to me, and she looked pleased; and when I asked where his room was, she said second floor rear. After she'd gone, I went down and tried the door, and it opened, and I had him in a corner. He jumped for his gun under the pillow, but I beat him. He began to shake, and I broke out the cartridges on the floor, and threw the gun into the corner, so I wouldn't forget and kill him too quick.

" 'What are you going to do about it?' he said.

" 'Where is she?' I said. 'Before I kill you.'

"He laughed; and I had to hang onto myself hard.

" 'I don't know or care a damn,' he said.

" 'Where is she?' I said. 'Please.'

"And then he got his nerve back.

" 'Quit your bluffing,' he said. 'Let me get past, or I'll hurt you.'

"I didn't move, and he shoved me; and then, when I held against him, he hit me. He was a big man, and he sent me back; but it was like a feather hitting me, and it started me.

"I took him by the arms and raised him off his feet, and began twisting his arms backward. He groaned, and his eyes stuck out, and he kicked me, and then he called out. I knew I mustn't make any noise, so I laid him on the floor, and put one hand across his mouth; and I twisted the body of him till it cracked like a chicken wing.

" 'Where is she?' I said; but he'd fainted, so I poured water on him and set him up in a chair. He came around in a minute, and said he didn't know, that she'd come to New York with him, and ran away from him that very night.

" 'Tell me the truth,' I said, and I took one of his hands, 'or I'll break you to pieces.' And I closed on it till it doubled.

"He broke down then, and begged and swore it was the truth, and that I could ask young Follette if I didn't believe him. He said to go to the end of the hall and knock. I said if he moved, I'd kill him, and waited outside the door a minute; but he didn't stir, so I went and knocked. A girl—I thought it was a child at first—came; and, when I told her, she followed me back into Steel's room.

" 'I'm her husband,' I said. 'He's told me one thing, and says you know it's true. You stand there behind him, and say what it is. About the girl he brought here last Tuesday night and what happened.'

"She looked at him, ugly like.

" 'Sure I will,' she said. 'And I wisht

I could give you the goods on him. I heard a row in his room that night after I got back from the show. Then the girl ran out and into my room, scared stiff. She didn't know much, or she wouldn't have been with him. He followed her, and tried to make her come back, but she wouldn't. She stayed the night with me, and left next morning.'

"Where did she go?" I said.

"I don't know," says she; 'but I know you're a fool to ever let her play around with *this*.' And she jerked her thumb at Steel, all hunched up in his chair. 'But she loves you. That's mostly why she ran away. She told me so. And now don't let any *more* grass grow under you till you find her. Can you understand?' she says.

"I didn't understand exactly, except that now I knew sure she loved me, and I went over and jammed him up onto his feet.

"You can owe Miss Follette something all your life," I said, 'because she's just saved it for you.'

"I'll have you sent up for this," he said.

"Help yourself," I said. 'I'll serve my term, and then I'll find you if you've run from here to China, and you know it. And if my girl ever comes to harm, I'll kill you, so help me God!'

"And I walked out. And that was the last I saw of him; but I know where to find him if ever I hear harm's come to her. And he's easy to know, because he walks crooked now from what I gave him that morning.

"Well, I tried to find her. I went to hotels, and boarding houses, and theaters; every place she might be likely to be. I put advertisements in the papers, and hired detectives; but it wasn't any use. I didn't know much about the city then; and it wasn't long before I was at the end of my money. So I went home, leased the shop, got somebody to take care of my place, and came back and got a steady job so I could be on the ground. First I got one as a machinist, and then I got this one.

"I guess it was a year before I ever found a trace of her, and that was

through a letter she wrote her mother. She said she got work in the theater for a while, but quit it. She was working now in a restaurant as cashier. She didn't say where, and she didn't give any address. I looked in restaurants for months; and one day when I showed the proprietor one of her pictures, he said it was a girl who had left two days before. He didn't know anything about her, or where she'd gone.

"I kept on looking. It was a terrible thing to know she might be without money, or sick, or in trouble of any kind. And sometimes I'd get sick with the fear she was dead.

"She hardly ever wrote home. About once a year, maybe. Her letters always seemed sort of sad. She couldn't have been very happy. Once I got track of her through the little Follette girl, who met her on the street. She was looking pale and sickly, and the Follette girl told her about my coming down and getting Steel, and how I was looking for her. She told the Follette girl she never wanted to see me again; and the Follette girl didn't know what had happened, so she couldn't tell her how Steel had lied to her. I was a fool not to have told the girl about it, but I did afterward; and perhaps some day she'll meet Rue again.

"That was six years ago. Her mother hasn't heard in a year now. Sometimes I think I'm going crazy with worry; but I always pull through. I look for her every extra minute I can get off, at the ferries, and the elevated and subway stations, and the churches, and theaters, and everywhere. And I always watch the morgue. I'm *afraid*! I don't dare to think I won't ever find her. It ain't right I shouldn't. Is it?"

He was silent. His face had changed little' when he talked. At times, his voice had been gruffer and forcedly flip-pant in tone.

"Why don't you try to forget her?" I asked.

"I can't. I wouldn't if I could. I've gotta find her and tell her, and then she can do what she wants. I think she'd come back if she knew. She told her mother she often thought of home, and

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wished she was back again; but she couldn't face the shame of it all. She said she'd rather go under and be forgotten, die an old maid, doing crochet work. She was always a great one to joke, even about sad things; and sometimes I guess even when she wanted to cry. She was always terrible proud, you know; terrible proud and headstrong."

"How do you know you could make her happy? By now she has grown set in her ways, just as you have. She would probably be happier without you."

He turned a troubled eye upon me.

"That's mebbe true," he said. "But there ain't anything else in life for me to do. I've saved up quite a bit of money for her. The little old house is waiting up there for her, just the same as it was the morning she was married. Her mother lives in it now. Old Drummle's dead; drank himself to death. Every year the flowers are planted and tended to, and the garden growing, and the house cleaned up and ready; and every morning there's flowers put in the window; and the bees are there, and the birds, and the little bridge, and the orchard—it's all there waiting for her." He turned to me wistfully. "I can't think, somehow, she isn't coming back."

We had come to my house, and I stopped. A dust cloud whirled down and engulfed us; and the voice of the city filled the air with a sullen, inexorable roar, punctuated by the clamor of near-by traffic.

I faced him.

"See here, Jones," I said. "Your story is rather interesting; but it's you who have messed things up from the

beginning. You are selfish to the core. All you really want is your own happiness, irrespective of the girl's. For my part, I hope you never find her. It's my opinion she never did like you, and I don't blame her for it. You aren't suited for her, anyhow. You've never done anything right. Why, you can't even deliver a little mail properly. Can you?"

He stood stock-still, gazing at me with a stupid, animallike helplessness in his eyes.

"No," I continued. "You can't even deliver mail properly. For example, you are eternally mixing my mail up with everybody's. Now I want you to come in here for a moment."

He obeyed meekly, and I led him up one flight of stairs.

"Only this morning," I went on, "I found a lot of junk in my mail box intended for some one else. Now, I don't want to report you. I returned it to its proper owner, and said I'd speak to you about it." I paused to let an expressman by who had come out of the hall room carrying a trunk. "I also said that I'd have you come up and explain things yourself. That's the door." And I pointed to the hall room.

He looked at me blandly; and, as I turned to the stairs, he moved heavily forward, and knocked on the door.

"What's the name?" he whispered from behind his hands.

"Jones, you imbecile," I answered, "else how could the mail be mixed? Rue Drummle Jones."

And then, as I heard a quick little step within, I went swiftly down the stairs.



THE GIFTS OF LOVE

THE gifts of love are not for one alone;
Whose love is noble can no need deny,
And in his heart, as in a garden grown,
Are roses free to all who may pass by.

ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.



HUTTON was a wide-open town; there could be no doubt of that. It was not as wild a town as it had once been; but neither had it experienced the regeneration that has affected the picturesqueness of so many Western towns, and incidentally made them more prosperous if less interesting. Gambling was open and gamblers numerous—not so open or so numerous as in the “good old days”; but still it was not necessary to advertise to find either. There was a cardroom in the hotel at which Alphabet Applegate and I stopped, poker in nearly all the saloons, and faro in some of them.

Tim Burke, popularly known as “Big Tim,” was the dominating spirit up and down the line, as we learned almost the first thing. We did not meet Tim, but we saw him. He was, as his sobriquet implied, a big man, but with little rat eyes that were altogether out of keeping with his bulk. He was engaged in the pleasant pastime of “trimming a sucker” when we saw him; and the way those rat eyes searched the “sucker” was enough to make one shudder.

Still, he impressed me as being treacherous and crafty rather than bold; and I mentally decided that he would be really dangerous only when he had the advantage.

The “sucker” was a young fellow somewhat the worse for liquor, but decidedly prepossessing in appearance

otherwise. One would have said that he was a good boy, but weak; and we learned later that this diagnosis would have been correct. He was not a gambler, but he gambled. He was not a drunkard, but he occasionally drank.

“Got a bunch of money from somewhere,” explained our pilot. “Tim has been trailin’ him ever since mornin’, and now he’s got him started, and will have his wad before he gits through.”

“But is it so certain in a game of chawnce?” asked Applegate.

“It ain’t a game of chance,” was the reply, “when Tim sits down with a sucker.”

“Fawney, now!” returned Applegate. “But you cawn’t always tell, you know, what’s a game of chawnce and what isn’t.”

I had occasion to recall that remark later; but at the moment it made no particular impression upon me.

A little later, when we left, we discovered a girl hovering about outside; and she was so evidently in distress that Applegate asked her if he could be of any service.

She hesitated a moment, studying his face.

“I wish,” she said, at last, “you would go in and tell Howard to come out. Tell him Alice wants him.”

“But I don’t know which is Howard,” Applegate objected.

“Why, it’s Howard Durand,” she explained, in surprise. “He’s with Big

Tim. You must know Big Tim, anyway."

Applegate nodded.

"Perhaps he'll come," she added, not very hopefully, it seemed to me, "if he knows I'm here."

Applegate and I returned to the saloon, and Applegate attempted to execute his commission.

"There's a lady wants you outside, old chap," he said pleasantly. "She said to tell you it was Alice."

The youth gave an impatient exclamation. Big Tim glowered. They were shaking dice, and Durand was evidently losing.

"Tell her to——" he began angrily, and then seemed to think better of what he was about to say. Perhaps something in Applegate's expression made him think better of it. "Tell her I'm busy, and can't come now," he said.

"I think you'd better," persisted Applegate.

"Well, I won't!" declared Durand.

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Big Tim insolently.

"None at all," answered Applegate. "I'm merely delivering the message, don't you know."

"Well, don't butt in!" cautioned Tim, in menacing tone.

"I won't," returned Applegate quietly. "I haven't the lady's permission to do more than I have done."

Applegate delivered the message to the girl, and it seemed to be about what she had expected.

"I suppose I may as well go home," she remarked wearily.

"Permit me," said Applegate, with more than his usual gallantry, "to see you there safely."

And, before I quite realized what was happening, they had walked away together.

Having nothing else to do, I returned to the saloon and watched Durand. He interested me. A young man who would not come at the call of such a girl as Alice deserved attention. He was unusual.

Two other men had now joined Tim and Durand, and they were beginning a poker game. The dice apparently had

been only a preliminary to lead him on. This was the real business; and it did not take me long to discover that the last two were merely dummies or confederates, who played always for the benefit of Tim.

I left in disgust finally. It was no affair of mine; but I hated to see this boy—he was little more than a boy—"trimmed" in this relentless and dishonest way. He had no more chance than a babe.

Applegate had not returned when I reached the hotel, which so troubled me that I determined to sit up for him. I had long ago learned that no one could tell what Applegate would do when there was a woman in the case, so all that I could do was to wait and see what he had done. As there was no closing law—at least, none that was enforced—I wandered into the barroom, and there became acquainted with various prominent citizens, who were also waiting, for one reason or another—principally another, I imagine.

An hour passed, and still there was no sign of Applegate. We were seated at a table—the aforesaid prominent citizens and myself—but I experienced some difficulty in keeping my mind on the conversation. I was beginning to be really worried. Then Durand entered, and I forgot Applegate for the moment in my interest in the boy. One had only to look at him to know that he had been "cleaned out," and that this marked a great tragedy in his life.

"Poor cuss!" commented Catlin, one of my companions at the table. "Tim's got him, all right. He ought to have knowed better; but you can't teach a fool to be wise. I wouldn't play with Tim, only for the drinks, or something like that, if the Angel Gabriel was refereein' the game, for Tim could put one over on Gabe as easy as on anybody else; and he certainly had his hooks out for this kid. Let's ask the boy over to have a drink."

I agreed willingly, and we soon had Durand at our table. Catlin asked him about his losses, and he said they were "a-plenty."

"But it's all in a lifetime," he added;

"and I can take what's coming to me without whimpering."

He tried to say this jauntily, carelessly; but his lip quivered, and I could see that it was all bravado, just surface talk. He wanted to show that he was "game," "a good sport"; but despair was in his heart. A little later, the insincerity of his pose was even more evident, for he suddenly dropped his head on his arms and began to cry.

At first, I was disposed to regard this weakness—this crying for money that he had lost through his own foolishness—with some contempt; but, when I remembered his extreme youth, contempt gave place to sympathy. It occurred to me, too, that possibly the affair was more serious than I suspected. Anyhow, home seemed the place for him now, so I suggested it. He shook his head vigorously.

"Better put him to bed here," said Catlin. "He needs sleep. Things won't look so bad to him when he wakes up."

The suggestion seemed to me a good one, and I took him to my own room.

"You'll feel better after a rest," I assured him. "You've been under a severe strain, and the liquor hasn't helped you any. Lost more money than you can afford, I imagine, but it might be worse."

He was over his crying now, and seemed to be in a sort of dull stupor.

"It is worse," he said drearily.

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"It was *her* money," he answered, in the same dull way.

"Whose?" I asked.

"Alice's."

"And who's Alice?"

"My wife."

His wife! I had thought she might be his sister, or even his sweetheart; but it never had occurred to me that these two children were married. And he had gambled away her money—a considerable sum, too, apparently!

I left him lying on the bed, his face to the wall, and thoughtfully retraced my steps to the barroom, where I asked a few questions of Catlin. I learned that the Durands had been married less than a year, that they lived in a little

house on the outskirts of the town, that he made barely enough to provide for himself and his wife in a very modest way, that he had been rather wild, but had become considerably steadier after assuming matrimonial responsibilities, that he had received from some source a sum of money in excess of two thousand dollars, that he had foolishly talked of it, that Tim apparently had set out deliberately to get the money, and that Tim now had it.

No other man would have been mean enough to do it; but neither did any other man feel called upon to interfere. A word or two of friendly caution might be permissible, but nothing more.

Dawn was streaking the eastern sky when Applegate finally appeared. Catlin and one other, Dawson, had lingered, as I learned was not unusual; but they were now leaving.

Applegate dropped into a vacant chair, and I told him what I had done with Durand.

"Dirty little cad!" he commented. "D'ye know what he's done, old chap?"

"Yes," I answered; "he told me. And you?"

"Oh, I got it from her," he returned. "She was so desperate and discouraged, and so in need of sympathy, don't you know, that I fawncy she'd have talked to anybody who was halfway decent to her."

"And where have you been since?"

"Wandering about, old chap," he replied. "It rawther upset me. I fawncy you don't know it all—how they heard this legacy of hers was coming, and planned what they'd do with it, and changed their plans, and planned it all over again, don't you know, and built air castles, and all that; and how it came at lawst; and she, like a bally little fool, turned it over to him to bank until they could use it; and he—well, he was so jolly well set up that he had to make a silly awss of himself telling everybody what he had, which got this Tim devil awfter him, of course."

"When he didn't come home to dinner or supper, and she heard he was chumming about town with the big wolf, she

knew what it meant, so she set out to find him and get him away, and failed, as you know. It's a pathetic little story, old chap, and it rawther upset me. I wandered along, thinking it all over, awfter leaving her at her door; and I lost myself, don't you know—got into a ravine, or something, that hid the town from me; and I didn't know which way it was. Fact, I assure you. But at lawst I came to where I could see the lights, and then I thought I'd look up this beastly cad, and see if I couldn't do something with him. But he was gone when I got back, so I came here. That's all there is to it, old chap. Jolly odd experience, wasn't it?"

I agreed that it was; and we discussed the Durands and what we had learned of their affairs briefly. I could not blame Applegate for his judgment of the boy; but I did want to make him see how heavy the odds against him were; how little chance he had in the hands of such an experienced scoundrel; and Applegate was finally able to take a more charitable view of the affair.

The real excitement began just as we were leaving for Applegate's room.

Catlin and Dawson returned with the startling news that "Big Tin" had been held up and robbed of all his winnings. He had lingered a little after "fleeing" Durand, and then had been waylaid by a man with a handkerchief mask while going home. Apparently, judging by the first hazy reports, he had so far justified my opinion of him that he had made no resistance when he found himself looking into the business end of a revolver. At any rate, he had given up his money, and let the highwayman get away unharmed.

No one had much sympathy with Tim in his latest exploit; but it was a reflection upon the town that a man could be deprived of even ill-gotten cash in this way. It was too brutal, too coarse; it lacked finesse. Hutton could not countenance methods so uncouth. So Barkley, the marshal, had been notified.

"Fawncy, now!" commented Applegate. "I said you never could tell what was a game of chawnce and what

wasn't. This Tim fellow thought it wasn't—and he lost, don't you know."

I gave Applegate a quick glance, for I suddenly recalled his long absence, and I knew what a champion of distressed womanhood he was. I thought, too, that I detected a note of exultation in his voice. Still, I could not imagine Applegate accomplishing even so laudable a purpose by such means. Others could, however; and I saw Catlin and Dawson exchange significant glances.

Then Tim, Barkley, and several others burst in.

"Where's Durand?" demanded Tim. "Where's that little whippersnapper sneak? He's the man that done it!"

"What makes you think so, old chap?" asked Applegate quietly.

"I recognized him," asserted Tim.

"With a mawsk?" queried Applegate.

"Yes, with a mask," answered Tim defiantly. "I don't need to see the face of a sucker I've trimmed to know him again. He said he was comin' down here when he quit the game. Did he come?"

"Yes," replied Applegate, "he came."

"How do you know?" put in Catlin.

"You wasn't here." Then to Tim: "This Britisher knows too much, Tim, and he was missin' nearly all night. You better look him over."

"I fawncy he'd know my voice," suggested Applegate; and the suggestion was so pat that we all smiled. The Applegate accent could hardly be disguised.

"Yes, the voice!" exclaimed Barkley. "Did you recognize that?"

Tim shook his head.

"He only said, 'Hands up!'" he explained. "And you could tell he was tryin' to speak unnatural; but he was a lot smaller man than the Britisher—jest Durand's size. I tell you, it was that little pizen skunk. Bein' some rattled, I didn't know him right away, or I'd have caught him by the heels and snapped his head off; but I was sure it was him when I got to thinkin' it over. When did he leave here?"

"Not at all," I told him. "He's up in my room asleep."

"That's right!" agreed Dawson.

"Holton took him up there soon after he came in."

"Show me!" demanded Tim.

I cheerfully agreed; and we all went up to the room, only to find it vacant. How long it had been vacant we could not learn, for no one had seen Durand leave; but the time, of which we had no account, so far as he was concerned, nicely covered the time of the holdup. It was possible that the boy had done it. Tim asserted positively that he had, and there was now some slight corroborative evidence.

"See if he's home," said Barkley.

We hastened to the little house, and found only the girl wife preparing breakfast. She moved about wearily, and her eyes proclaimed that they had experienced more of tears than sleep during the preceding night; but she certainly tried to show us a bold front.

"Where's your husband, Mrs. Durand?" asked Barkley.

She looked us over for a moment before answering, seeking our purpose apparently.

"I don't know," she said at last. "He didn't come home last night."

"You might as well tell," urged Barkley.

"Better ask him!" she returned, indicating Tim. "He had him the last that I knew."

There was so much of significance in this that it irritated Tim.

"It won't do no good to lie!" he exclaimed brutally.

"I wouldn't talk that way, old chap," put in Applegate.

"Oh, you wouldn't!" retorted Tim.

"No, I wouldn't," said Applegate, as imperturbable as ever, "because, if you do, don't you know," he added, "I'll break your bally neck!"

The last few words came out with an emphasis that was the more effective because of the mildness of the beginning. Tim gave him a sharp glance, and was not reassured. Applegate had suddenly lost his languid air, and looked like a man who could and would do just what he said.

"What do you want him for?" asked the girl, turning to Barkley.

"He held up Big Tim," answered Barkley.

The girl was plainly startled, but only for a moment. Then she laughed.

"Howard hold up Big Tim!" she said. "Why, Tim could break him in two. I've heard him say so."

"A gun makes a big difference," retorted Tim sullenly, for he knew that his prestige was suffering.

"It's absurd!" she maintained earnestly. "Howard couldn't do such a thing; he isn't that sort. But," she added, stepping up to Tim defiantly, "I wish he had!"

"Well, if he didn't," put in Barkley, "he's got a whole lot to explain, and I'm sorry, Mrs. Durand, but I'll have to search the house."

She was troubled now, but she made no objection. Barkley and Tim led the search, as many of the rest of us as could crowd in trailing along. But there was no trace of either Durand or the money.

"He's skipped!" declared Tim.

"It looks that way," agreed Barkley; and he immediately organized three parties for pursuit.

We did not go with any of the parties. I was in favor of going along for the adventure; but Applegate detained me. It was the girl, I discovered, who detained him.

"What will they do if they find him?" she asked.

"I cawn't say," he answered; "but it's rawther a strong case, don't you know—largely circumstantial, but quite convincing as it stands now." And he told her of Tim's direct charge, and of Durand's remorse and subsequent disappearance from the hotel. "And he cawn't be found now," he concluded. "It looks as if he were in hiding."

"Yes," she said, "it does."

"And he's been here," he added.

She hesitated just a moment, searching his eyes.

"Yes, he's been here," she admitted, "but I didn't see him."

"I fawncy not," he returned. "Still, I'd warn him, don't you know. He may not be as careful as he should be, and I cawn't see much hope, as matters stand,

if he's caught. It would be a long term——"

"Jail! The penitentiary!" she cried. "No, no! I won't have it so! I'll—— But, don't you see, I can't warn him! I'd only betray him! They'll be watching me."

"But not me," said Applegate significantly.

Again that searching look.

"Will you carry a message?" she asked.

"With pleasure," replied Applegate.

"I don't know—I'm not sure—but I think Joe Gilson will know where he is," she said. "Do you know Joe?"

We did not, so she gave us the necessary directions for finding his house.

"He'll almost sure be at home," she explained, "for he has his office there. Just ask him if he can tell Howard to keep under cover and wait for Alice, who knows everything, and will come to him when she can."

I was puzzled and worried. Applegate knew altogether too much, I reflected, as we started on this mission; there was too close an understanding between him and the girl. He had known that Durand returned to the house the night before. He had been away himself nearly all night. He had not given a very satisfactory explanation of this absence; and he was now further involving himself in an effort to protect Durand. I suggested that I had been willing to help the boy when it was a question of drink and foolishness; but crime was another matter.

"But it's not crime, old chap," objected Applegate.

"Not crime to hold a man up!" I exclaimed. "He had provocation, I admit, but——"

"But he didn't do it," interrupted Applegate.

"Didn't do it!" I was too startled to say much. "How do you know?"

"I can't tell you that," Applegate replied; "but I'm quite sure of it, old chap."

"Well, if you know that," I declared, "you know too much to suit me. Who did do it? Did you?"

"I'd rawther not talk of it just now," he answered.

Gilson was at home, as the girl had predicted. Applegate asked him if he could get a message to Durand. Gilson was noncommittal.

"What's the message?" he asked.

"Tell him," said Applegate, "that Alice says he's in great danger, that he must keep under cover, and that she'll come to him when she can."

The message surprised me almost as much as it seemed to surprise Gilson. The "danger" part, which had not been in the original message, seemed to indicate that Applegate considered himself something more than a mere messenger. Gilson's surprise, however, was occasioned by something else.

"She'll come!" he repeated doubtfully.

"That's what she said, old chap," asserted Applegate. "I presume you know——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Gilson, "I've just heard of it."

"Well?" queried Applegate.

Somehow Applegate always convinced people of his absolute sincerity. Gilson hesitated hardly at all.

"Tell Mrs. Durand," he said, "that her message will be delivered."

We went back to the hotel; and Applegate employed a boy to deliver the message "All right" to Mrs. Durand.

"I fawncy we'd better not be going out there just now," he said; "but we will later, don't you know. I'm awfter getting this thing settled right."

Naturally it did not surprise us greatly when the searching parties returned with no news of the fugitive; but we made a pretense of being deeply interested in their reports.

It was dark when Applegate finally suggested: "I think we might chawnce it now, don't you know?"

We went to the Durand cottage, of course; and what we found there was one of the greatest surprises of my Applegate experiences, extraordinary and numerous as these were.

There were two boys in the house. One of them was on his knees to the other. He was pleading for forgive-

ness apparently. The other leaned over and kissed him; and I saw then that it was Mrs. Durand in masculine attire.

"I was just coming for you, Howard," she said. "We must get away through the mountains to-night. They think you did it, and—and— Oh, you were foolish to come here."

"I had to come—just had to come!" he explained. "I couldn't wait a minute longer than was necessary after I got your message of forgiveness. You're too good to me, Alice. I was in despair when I failed to find you here last night. I was frantic. I didn't really know what I was doing. I wanted help, sympathy, advice, so I went to Joe, and he insisted upon sleep first."

"Yes, yes, I understand," she returned, "but we must go now. They are looking for you, and I— Well, you see that we *must* get away."

The whole story was clear to me now; but I was not prepared for Applegate's next move. He intercepted them as they were leaving.

"I don't think it's necessary to run away, don't you know," he said. "Just keep under cover, as you put it, and give me a chance."

He talked earnestly to the girl for a few minutes, ignoring Durand; and then hurried me back to the saloon where we had first seen Tim. He was there now; and Applegate asked for a word or two with him confidentially. Tim was reluctant, but finally acquiesced.

"I've found your holdup man, don't you know," said Applegate; "but I fawncy you'd better let him go."

"Watch me letting him go!" snorted Tim. "Where is he?"

"It isn't a he, old chap," replied Applegate. "It's a she. It would be a great joke, don't you think, if people knew about it. Mrs. Durand simply got back her own money, you know."

"Oh, no," retorted Tim scornfully. "You can't put that over. It was Durand himself."

"There's an alibi for Durand," explained Applegate. "I found the hat he wore last night behind the wood box while you silly awsses were searching the house. It's all quite clear, don't you

know. He went home when he left the hotel, but didn't find her there, for she was out taking her money away from you just then." Tim winced, apparently finding humiliation in the reference. "He was jolly well knocked up, and didn't know what to do," Applegate continued; "so he went to his one true friend, Joe Gilson; and Joe took care of him."

"I fawncy that makes a pretty good alibi for him, so now let's see about her. She came back afterward, and got out of his clothes and into her own again; but she forgot one or two things, don't you know. She tightened the waist of the trousers with a safetypin, old chap, and forgot to take it out; and she forgot about her hair, too. Did you ever notice how a woman has to wad her hair up when she puts on a man's hat? I fawncy not; but I'm a bit of a detective, you know, and the safety pin and the hair were enough for me. If he didn't do it, and she'd been masquerading as a man, why, any silly awss could see what had happened. It's a great jest—what? Big Tim held up by a girl! Cawn't you hear the lawfwer? And she only took back her own money! Wouldn't you rawther have nothing said about it?"

Tim considered this a moment, then forced a laugh. Anything was better than an admission that he had been held up by a girl.

"Boys," he called out, "this Britisher is all right. He sure put one over on me. Why, it was all a frame-up, a joke, and the money's been returned. Let it go at that, and everybody line up to the bar. The drinks are on me."

It was not very creditable to him, this explanation; but it was the best he could do on short notice apparently. He shook hands with Applegate, to show that there were no hard feelings; but I think he would have preferred to stick a knife in him. However, the safety of the Durand secret and the Durand money was assured; and, as Applegate remarked later:

"I fawncy the boy has had his lesson, and will be more of a man because of it."

THE CHILD

Julie M. Lippmann

A LOT is going to depend on the child, J. S.," observed John Raymond, gathering together the four typewritten acts comprising his latest play, and securing them in his leather carrying case.

"Right you are! A lot is going to depend on the child," drawled the manager.

Roydon Millard, who was to be "featured" in the new production, drew his fine eyebrows together in a slight frown.

"After mine, I should say no other part would count for so much, eh, Thorndyke?" he said.

Joseph Schlesinger's right-hand man, leaning back in his chair, yawned wearily.

"You're going to have a hot time finding the right boy; and when you've got him you're going to have the deuce of a one licking him into shape."

John Raymond's nervous fingers fidgeted uneasily over the clasps of his carrying case.

"I can see you all think I've bitten off more than I can chew," he brought out at last, an unmistakable air of pique in his voice and manner.

"Well, I wouldn't say that exactly," Thorndyke replied, straightening up with an effort. "You've shown you can chew a pretty big mouthful, when it comes to that; but, in my opinion, this child is the biggest yet."

"That's what I think," interrupted Millard eagerly. "Can't you modify

the child? Abbreviate him? He's too prominent, too much emphasis is thrown on him. If you were to cut him down about half, you'd be more likely to get a boy equal to the part, and it would leave the weight of the piece where it belongs—on me."

"That's a great bit," ruminated J. S. in his low, measured, inward voice, "where the boy unexpectedly butts in between What's-his-name—Clyde—and the girl, his wife—Agnes—when he's laying her out, and she has no one to defend her. That ought to make a hit—David and Goliath sort of business ought to score with an audience."

Roydon Millard snapped his finger nails irritably.

"Now, isn't that curious? I don't like that scene. It's dramatic, all right, of course; but all the sympathy is with the boy. He'll get the house, sure. Besides, would a gentleman use his wife so? And you mean Clyde to be a gentleman, I take it, notwithstanding he's a bit of a bounder at the start, and has got himself into a tight hole. Personally, I don't believe a gentleman would talk to his wife like that."

Thorndyke brought his jaws together with a snap.

"Pooh, pooh!" he ejaculated impatiently. "You're off there, Millard. Nothing's the matter with the way he talks to his wife. Any gentleman would do it. I do."

"Oh!" ejaculated the actor weakly; and there was a pause, in which the

general irritation was plainly to be felt.

"We-ell, gentlemen," J. S. brought out at length, "we're neglecting what we are here for. We're here to consider this new piece *and* the public. In other words, we're here to consider what to do, whom to do, and how to do 'em. Let's get to business."

The general laugh that followed relaxed the tension, in a measure, and it was possible to take up the discussion of the child without so much risk of imminent combustion.

"My wife knows of a boy who'd fill the bill to a T," announced John Raymond. "She says he's a great kid. To tell you the truth, her description of him gave me my idea for the part, in the first place. He must be a curious little beggar, a character. He's very suggestive."

"How old?" questioned J. S.

"Neighborhood of ten, but doesn't look it," John Raymond replied. "On he'd pass very well for seven, the age of the boy in the play. Give me half a chance, and I'll do great things with him."

"Perhaps it's your idea to make him the star and me his support," Millard muttered inaudibly.

"Where is he?" demanded J. S. "If Jane Baker—I beg your pardon, Raymond—if Mrs. Raymond can get hold of him at once, we might have a look at the kid."

"Jane's been busy for the last month trying to trace him. She didn't have much to go on, for it is six years since she and the mother played in the same company; but she's made connections at last. I think we can get him, all right."

"My idea would be," broke in Roydon Millard impressively, "that, as soon as you've settled on him, he should come and stay with me, so he'll get used to me—fond of me. We can chum together, and get to be friends. We'll go over our scenes just as if they were a part of everyday life, and—"

"Bully idea!" approved Thorndyke. J. S. pulled down his long upper lip.

"You going to invite the mother, or

whoever the kid belongs to, to join your select kindergarten?" he demanded dryly.

"I hadn't thought of that," said Mr. Millard, a sudden drop in his enthusiasm.

"The mother's sick," John explained. "Jane says she was delicate when she knew her—an underfed, overworked little body, struggling to support herself and the child. It seems, the husband died, or—something, before the boy was born. Jane doesn't know the circumstances. She never asks questions, and the woman didn't tell. But it was easy to see what a hard pull the mother was having to keep body and soul together—to say nothing of the boy. That was before he began to act. Now, of course, he commands his price, and they're on Easy Street; but, as luck will have it, just as she's fairly on her feet, the mother has gone to pieces. She's waiting to get the child settled on a new job, and then it's *her* for a sanitarium—rest cure, and that sort of thing. She'll be stranded on her bed for three months at least, she writes Jane. Solitary-confinement effect, no callers, no letters, no nothing. Cheerful prospect? Yes? She says she'll be glad to let us have the kid, if Jane will guarantee to look after him."

"Have him on," dictated J. S.

They had him on.

"So this is Allan!" exclaimed Jane Baker, as the little figure she had been forewarned would arrive by the train that had just pulled into the Grand Central made his way up the long station platform with the crowd, and through the gate at which she was eagerly awaiting him.

"Yes, I am Allan," replied the boy simply.

"You don't look a bit like the little Allan I knew six years ago," chatted she companionably, to make conversation, the while she led the child to a waiting taxi, and negotiated with an expressman about his baggage.

"I oughtn't to look like I did then," said Allan seriously. "A boy of ten oughtn't to look like he did when he was four, ought he?"

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"Surely not!" Mrs. Raymond confessed soberly, and the conversation languished.

Out of the corner of her eye, she glanced down at him as he sat beside her, discerning a slender, straight-limbed little fellow, pale of face, big-eyed, and serious; at once looking younger and behaving older than his years.

With a sudden impulse of the mother instinct, she shyly slid her arm about his shoulders.

He did not shrink or repulse her. He simply suffered her caress silently. Presently, however, he spoke.

"Do you believe in fairies?" he demanded solemnly.

Jane Baker felt she was being called upon for no idle statement of opinion, but a sincere confession of faith upon which some mighty conclusion might hang. She considered the matter carefully.

"Why," she brought out at length, "I believe in good fairies—that is, good spirits. Every good thought we have is—"

"I don't mean *those*," interrupted Allan quickly. "I mean *real* fairies. Ones that could, if they wanted to, turn my mother into an owl."

Mrs. Raymond felt herself giving a masterly performance of The Serious Listener. Not the faintest shadow of a smile betrayed her. She was as serious as a judge upon the bench.

"Oh, no, indeed! Not bad fairies! I don't believe in bad fairies."

"But if," insisted Allan, pursued by his haunting inner suggestion; "but if there really *was* bad fairies, could they—could they turn my mother into a owl?"

Something within Jane Baker's nun-like nature suddenly expanded, softened, opened wide. In an instant it was revealed to her what was in the boy's mind. She understood his question, and all it signified.

"Why, no, Allan," she replied convincingly, "there are no fairies of that sort. None at all. Nothing could turn your mother into an owl or anything else you wouldn't like. No one can

harm your mother in the least. She is as safe as safe can be."

"Coz," explained Allan, after a moment of consideration, during which he heaved a mighty sigh and bit his babyishly quivering lip; "coz, you see, I'm not there now to take care of her. I am her nachel pertecter; and if I was away and she was alone, and if there *was* fairies like those, why—"

"There aren't!" declared Jane conclusively; and, though Allan said no more, she felt he accepted her dictum, and would sleep the better for it.

His strange, unchildlike reserve melted gradually before John Raymond's cordial good-fellowship. Even brusque J. S. won his own peculiar way to the boy's heart; and "Jane Baker" he had accepted and adopted as his own from the first. The one from whom he held aloof, who could not seem to overcome his vague distrust, his instinctive prejudice, was Roydon Millard.

"I don't know," was all the child would say when John Raymond plied him for a reason.

He listened attentively to the story of the play as it was unfolded to him, approving some parts, objecting to others, but considering all from a very intimate, personal standpoint.

"It may be," speculated Jane one day, "that he identifies Mr. Millard with *Clyde* in the play. I suppose a child might do that, mightn't he, John? I mean confuse the real with the make-believe?"

"Suppose you find out," suggested John.

"Do gentlemen gener'ly swear at ladies, Jane Baker?" demanded Allan, with apparent irrelevance, one evening soon after.

"No, they never do. Why?"

"Coz," replied the boy briefly.

Jane Baker waited.

Presently Allan, pursuing his line of thought, spoke again.

"Then *Clyde* isn't a gentleman, is he? He isn't even a fack-smile of a gentleman."

"A—wha—at? Oh, yes—forgive me! I was thinking of something else," hastily blundered Jane, trying to cover

her tracks and hide her momentary failure to grasp his phonetics.

But Allan was too full of his subject to be conscious of anything beyond.

"He swears fierce at *Agnes* in the play," he mused aloud. Then: "Do gentlemen call strange ladies—ladies they don't know—by their first names right off, Jane Baker?"

Mrs. Raymond hesitated.

"Why, no. I should say a gentleman wouldn't be apt to do so. It would be a great liberty, I think, don't you?"

"Yes," Allan said. "An' I don't think Mr. Millard's a gentleman, either, coz that's what he did to Miss Ainley—he called her 'Maudie' 'most the first time he saw her at rehearsal."

Jane Baker was not accustomed to children. She had never heard of "the point of contact," "meeting them on the plane of their own experience"; but she felt she had, in some way, to make the situation clear.

"You see, it's this way, Allan," she ventured. "Mr. Millard does not mean to be disrespectful to Miss Ainley; but people get very well acquainted in a very short time when they're on the stage, as we are. Now, you and I, for instance. You don't call me Mrs. Raymond, do you? You call me Jane Baker, and yet *you* are a gentleman."

"It's different," insisted Allan.

"And as to *Clyde*," Jane hastened on, not caring to press her point, "suppose a boy grows up and everybody has always spoiled him. He isn't a bad boy at heart; but he is rich, and handsome, and has been brought up to feel he is of great importance—that he must have whatever he wants. Well, a boy like that is almost sure to become very selfish, and the things he thinks he wants are not always the best things, so that he has to go through a lot of hardship before he learns better and becomes a good man. That's the way it is with *Clyde*. But he grows to be good at the end, when it is very hard for him to be so. That's why we like him, and forgive him, and say he is a gentleman in spite of his having been so bad 'first off,' as you say, and swearing fierce at a lady."

It was not clear to Jane how much Allan comprehended of what she had been saying. He was quiet and attentive, as always; but then it was his habit to fall into fits of musing; and, when at last he spoke, his words did not shed much light on the question that puzzled her.

"I like to play the part of a boy who perfects his mother," was all he said.

"It's a good part to play," Mrs. Raymond assented heartily.

"I could," Allan assured her shyly, "I could perfect *you*, too."

Jane threw a casual nod in his direction without turning her head toward him.

"Thanks, no end," she said. "I'd like it above all things. But, you see, I've Mr. Raymond. A woman's husband is the one who can protect her best. That is—I mean—he has the right above any one else to protect her. And if a woman hasn't—I ought to say, if a woman has lost her husband—why, then, of course, her son takes his place. But if I were to turn Mr. Raymond's job over to you, he might—"

"What might he?" pressed Allan.

"He might be jealous," Jane Baker confided gravely.

"What's jealous?"

"Why, when you love anybody very much, and you think somebody else may like him, or he may like somebody else better. It's not a pleasant thing to be jealous, and it's not a *good* thing."

"The first I ever knew of that jealous," the boy said, a moment later, in his thoughtful way, "was the other day before rehearsal. Mr. Millard was talking to Miss Ainley in the wings, and all of a sudden she whispered, quick as anything, and cross, into his ear: 'You don't wear the tie I made you any more, Roy. What's the matter? Are you tired of it, and—me? Look out! Don't make me jealous!' And Mr. Millard, he put his mouth together like this—the way he does when he's *Clyde* in the play, and is ready to make *Agnes* cry, and he said—only I didn't hear any more, coz it was my cue, but—"

"Never mind. It doesn't signify." Jane Baker made haste to assure him.

"By the way, Allan," she went on hurriedly, "Mr. Raymond and I have been wondering if you wouldn't like to have some nice little boys—not stage children, you know—come here and visit you sometimes. I think it would be awfully good for you; and good for them, too. It would be a change, and you could have great sport together. Now, don't you think that's a famous idea?"

"No, I don't," he announced promptly. "I was acquainted with some of those when we were playing Chicago once. My mother got 'em for me to know, and she said they was reel nice boys. They said: 'Le's play Indian.' An' I said: 'Aw ri-ight.' Then they started in, without any rehearsal or anything—no props nor nothing. What you think of *that*? Just snapped their fingers, an' said 'Bang!' when they wanted to do shootin'. An' I tell you they gave a bum performance. I told 'em it was a bum performance. I said: 'That ain't playin' Indian.' An' they said: 'Tis, too.' I said: 'Tain't.' They said: 'What d'you want, anyhow? We's only pretendin'.' I said: 'Pretendin' ain't *playin'*.' They said: 'Tis, too.' I said: 'Tain't.' They said: 'You don't know how to play.' I said: 'Do, too. Don't know how yourself.' An' then one of 'em up an' hit me a clip in the eye, an' I went for him, an' we had it fierce, an' I licked—but I won't let anybody say I don't know how to play. I *do* know how, don't I, Jane Baker?" he brought out anxiously, when she did not back him up as promptly as he evidently had expected her to do.

Mrs. Raymond somehow found the moment a very moving one. She gathered him up in her arms.

"You poor kiddie!" she murmured unsteadily, kissing him.

"Do you think Miss Ainley likes Mr. Millard very much, and that's the reason she said he mustn't make her jealous?" persisted Allan, reverting to his original theme after his own pertinaacious fashion.

"Really, Allan, I don't know anything about it."

The child studied her face in silence.

"I don't like Mr. Millard so very much," he vouchsafed presently. "He has the big head."

Jane Baker tried hard to suppress a smile.

"Who told you that?" she asked.

"Nobody told me. I just found it out, all alone by myself."

"Well, I can tell you this," she said, rising and turning away as she spoke, in order to terminate a conversation she felt was growing too personal for comfort. "I can tell you this: You may think Mr. Millard has a big head; but I know one thing, he has a big heart, too. Mr. Raymond says he's all right; and, if there is any trouble with him at all, it is because he is so handsome and such a good actor that he has been petted to death and spoiled to within an inch of his life."

"Like *Clyde* in the play?" mused Allan.

"Yes, like *Clyde* in the play," acquiesced Jane Baker.

It was soon after this that Roydon Millard announced to her and John Raymond that he thought "the little beggar" had really tumbled to him at last.

"Jove, but it has been a hard pull to win him over!" he said, with a wry smile. "I don't know why it is one cares if he likes one or not; but, 'pon honor, one does. Somehow he makes a man want to measure up to his standard—whatever it may be. Curious, isn't it?"

"I know what you mean," Jane Baker hastened to assure him. "John and I have felt the same thing from the first. We are very much on our good behavior these days, I can assure you. Allan keeps us up to the mark, doesn't he, John?"

Raymond nodded.

"The boy is no mollicoddle; but you can see he's been brought up by a woman—a *good* woman."

"There's one thing he's done for me," Millard went on to inform them; "he's given me a new conception of *Clyde*. I wasn't altogether clear on him before. I didn't follow your idea, Raymond. But now I see what you're driving at;

and, by George, it's a great conception! If I do with *Clyde* what I want to do, he'll be the greatest piece of characterization I'll ever have given."

"Glad you've caught on. Those things can't be explained if you don't take them in yourself. You're going to do great work as *Clyde*. You're going to make him stand for something worth while."

Jane Baker wondered why Millard neglected to jump at the excellent chance John had just given him to launch into one of his rhapsodies of self-appreciation. Instead, he said quietly:

"If everything pans out as it ought to, there'll be no road for us this year. We'll be good for a run straight through the solid season in little old New York; and that's some of a joy ride; eh, Raymond?"

"I believe you," said John.

It was well on toward the end of October before the play was produced on Broadway.

One night, during the second week after its successful première, Mr. Millard, having come to the theater earlier than usual, was leisurely putting the last touches to his careful make-up, when he heard Allan running gayly past his half-open dressing-room door, whistling, singing, exploding into little gurgling gusts of laughter all at once.

"Oh, Allan!" sang out Mr. Millard.

The boy stopped short, turned about, and came back.

"Come on in, old man. I say, what's up? Seems to me you're uncommonly fit to-night."

Allan stood upon the threshold, balancing himself upon one foot, then upon the other.

"Tain't a *fit*," he explained literally. "I'm just sorter—kinder—uscited."

Mr. Millard feigned intense concern.

"Excited, eh? What about?"

The boy gave him a searching look, as if to satisfy himself that the interest the other expressed was genuine; then, fairly hopping up and down in the ecstasy of his enthusiasm, he cried softly, confidentially, joyously:

"I've had a s'prise! Come, I'll show you!"

He led the way to his own dressing room, the door of which was closed. He laid his eager little hand upon the knob, and noiselessly turned it—shoved the door a trifle inward.

"Look there!" he whispered, trying hard to control the tremulous triumph in his voice.

Mr. Millard looked—looked and saw nothing but a slight, black-clad, girlish figure seated in Allan's own little chair, beside his make-up table. Her back was to the door.

"Who is it?" whispered Mr. Millard.

Allan's fever could no longer be held in check. He exploded into a shout of sheer ecstasy.

"My—mother!" he cried, bounding forward and casting himself upon her.

At the first sound of his voice, the woman had risen. Now, with Allan hanging on her neck, she turned.

"Good God!" gasped Roydon Millard, looking in her face.

The breathless syllables, the silence that followed them, seemed to paralyze the boy. He hung upon his mother's neck, his eyes fixed, staring at Millard, until she raised her hands and gently, lovingly unclasped his clinging fingers. Then he dropped silently to his feet, and stood regarding his two companions with wide-open, wondering eyes.

For a moment neither spoke. Millard was the first to move. With lagging feet, he took a couple of steps forward.

"Nan!" he said.

But before she could answer, if indeed she had meant to answer, the child had flung himself bodily between them, his eyes blazing.

"Don't you dare to call my mother—that!" he brought out shudderingly. "She ain't your mother. You have no right to her. She's *my* mother, an' I'm goin' to perfect her. What are you waitin' for? Why don't you go 'way? Why do you look at her so? You don't belong."

"I do belong, Allan," Roydon Millard stammered. "I was—I am——"

"Your father," whispered Nan.

"No, no, no!" the boy stormed. "I don't care. I hate him—I hate him—I hate him! He shan't be my father. He shan't be *that* what he said. He don't 'serve you. You're mine! You're mine! Nobody else in all the world has any right 'ceptin' me!"

The mother knelt, her arms about his neck, her face upon his little shoulder.

"No one *has* any right to me, Allan, but you," she said.

"Listen, Allan," pleaded Roydon Millard. "I was naughty to your mother. I said—I did—I was like *Clyde*. But I have been sorry ever since. I was sorry then. I'd have told her so, but she had gone away. I could not find her. I don't deserve it; but, Allan, I want her to forgive me. I want her to take me back. I *want*—her. I want—*you*." His voice broke in a sob.

The first quick blaze of Allan's rage was spent; but, as he looked at Roydon Millard, there was no sign of softening in his eyes. The curse of his profession was on him. He associated the actor's emotion in his own mind with that he had seen him assume in his part. He did not believe in him. Perhaps the mother did not believe in him, either. The man saw it. For once in his life, Roydon Millard was unaffectedly sin-

cere. He turned to go. He had reached the door, when Allan sprang forward.

"If she wants you," he gasped. "If she *wants* you, you can stay. You was bad first off; but if you want to be good, if you've tried, I guess you're a gentleman, all right, all right. You have a big head; but you have a big heart, too, Jane Baker said. And I'll *try* not to be jealous, coz it ain't good to be it, she told me. I can perfect my mother; but husbands can perfect better, an'—perhaps—if she *wants* you why—"

He put out a hesitating hand.

"Your boy is a trump!" Roydon Millard whispered brokenly.

"*Our* boy," said Nan.

There was a rap upon the door, then the sound of the monotonous voice of the call boy uttering his droning announcement as he went along the passage from dressing room to dressing room.

"Overture! Overture!"

Allan looked up as he slid his arms about his mother's neck.

"In the play," he explained to her, with wistful emphasis; "in the *play*, I do the part of a boy who perfects his mother."



A SUPPLICATION

DEAR Night, I crave a potion for unrest,
To steep my wearied senses in repose;
Bring me leaf odors from the woodland's breast;
The faint, wet sweetness of a wayside rose,
Swept lightly by the breeze; the squandered myrrh
Of herbs close-nestled in the mosses deep—
Of little mallows, dewy-pink, that stir
To meet the zephyr's kisses in their sleep.

My pillow is so hot! Oh, kindly Night,
Gather the breath of bosk and coppice cool,
Of cuplike water flowers, silver white
That vein the darkness of a drowsy pool;
And let their mingled spice drip over me
With gracious touch on brain, and brow, and limb,
That I may slumber, and my dreams may be
Of God's great forest-cloisters, hushed and dim.

HARRIET WHITNEY DURBIN.

THE GREEN TURQUOISE



OLIVE M. BRIGGS

GENERAL CHATTERTON was an interesting personality, as every one knows who has read the English papers.

After his retirement from active service, when the Boer War was over, he came back to London with his white hair, his bronzed cheeks, his military bearing, with three-score years to his credit, and his breast covered with medals, and society started in to lionize him. They did—whenever they could catch him. He was shy as a hawk and coquettish as a chamois. Not "drawing-room broken," as he said of himself, after a lifetime spent in tents or bivouacking under a horse blanket—and the traps that they set to snare him were extraordinary. Wherever he roared, there was always a crowd. Wherever there was a dinner: "Chatterton, he's the man for the speaker! For Heaven's sake, get him! Get him to tell of his Indian service!"

But nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand, the first whiff of man in the air was enough. By the time the committee had stalked him to his lair—pompous, panting, high-silk-hatted, kid-gloved, armed with air guns to puff out empty compliments—why, the victim had fled. The thousandth time— Well, it was at my own club, and this is how it happened:

"You've met the old general, of course, McD., haven't you?"

The man who asked me that question had the seat next me at table—Barry Whittemore, a young lawyer. His tone was of gentle irony. The oc-

casional was simply a luncheon in the grillroom, and we sat wherever we pleased.

"Because, if you haven't," my friend continued banteringly, "here he comes through the doorway, and headed straight for us. By Jove, his scent has forewarned him! All the other empty places are flanked by hunters."

With a careless nod, and scarcely a glance, Barry greeted the newcomer, proceeding busily to unfold his napkin. I followed his lead. The general, accompanied by an aid-de-camp, young, small, and exceedingly callow, who was there to protect the big man, took the two vacant seats just opposite. He returned Barry's nod still more carelessly.

In a second every head in the place was turned, every eye was immediately on him. An elderly waiter, with the precision and aloofness of the trained foreigner, moved noiselessly about and offered the wine card. He held it out to Chatterton impersonally, obsequiously. In that moment—his attention called off, absorbed—I studied the face of the general in silence.

It was heavily, rather coarsely, molded. A striking head, set on shoulders broad, powerful, with the form and limbs of a Hercules. The hair was snow-white, worn long like a mane; the mouth hidden by a thick white mustache; the eyes small, very blue, and piercing. The eyes of a man who was used to power, and from the look of his chin he intended to have it.

Instinctively, unconsciously, I glanced

at Barry. Although the types of the two men were utterly different, in this one trait they were both alike, they were natural leaders. Men of weaker stamp would yield to their wills as inevitably as steel to a magnet. What would happen in case those two wills should clash? I caught myself wondering.

The general just then had given his order, and was tucking his napkin into his waistcoat. Not a word had been spoken, when Barry suddenly leaned forward. He did it without forethought, he told me afterward, more to break the silence than anything else; and because the color happened to strike him.

"That's a curious ring you have there, general! I beg your pardon, but a turquoise like that is rather a rarity."

"Yes, er—really?" The general glanced casually over at Barry. "The workmanship is unusual. Quite so!"

"Indian, sir, if I'm not mistaken."

"Exactly — Indian." Chatterton turned to his aid-de-camp. "As a matter of fact, Keith, do you know, I only got it the other day. The circumstances were rather peculiar."

"Peculiar?" said Barry.

He had an abstracted look on his face as he spoke, as of one whose thoughts have been miles away, called back by an effort. His tone was mechanical.

The general took a spoonful of soup before answering. At his elbow stood the waiter.

"Excellent, this, Jean—just the right flavor! It's wonderful what these French chefs can make out of just a medley of stuff flung together! You've got a new man?"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"Ah-h!"

He took another spoonful. Barry waited a moment, smothering a yawn; then started suddenly, and again leaned forward.

"Excuse me, general—how very strange! Why, that stone in your ring is a green turquoise! It is a turquoise, isn't it? I am surely not mistaken. Did you ever see a green turquoise before?" He turned, confronting me as

he spoke. "Won't you hold your hand up to the light again, general? There, look, McD., look! It's a perfect beauty."

"Are you a collector, sir?" said the general. "You know a good stone when you see one, do you?"

"Well, not exactly—no!" said Barry. "But antiques, that sort of thing, they're a hobby of mine. You wouldn't let me—er—oh, thank you!"

I stared at Barry in blank amazement. Antiques a hobby of his! Why, he couldn't tell an antique from a saucepan! His eyes met mine gravely, and he went on talking, with the air of an expert:

"Now, a blue turquoise, general, of course, we all know they are common enough—and those just off color. They say any acid in the water will do it. But a green like this, it's extraordinary! You have heard the legend about them, haven't you?"

"No, I can't say I have."

The general looked at my friend rather curiously. As Barry stopped, he laid down his spoon; the sudden interest aroused was evident.

"No? Well, it's an odd superstition. Heaven knows how it originated! I heard of it first years ago, from an old French jeweler, a dealer in Marseilles. He said he believed it. If a turquoise, he said, is given in troth between two lovers, and the one is faithless, the blue stone that the faithless one wears turns green. Just as this has, you see. The change is unmistakable, it occurs immediately; and through it each lover can test the other. Without words, or scenes, simply at a glance, they can tell how they stand beyond the shadow of a doubt. Very practical that—must save lots of trouble! It's an Indian legend."

Barry took up his fork carelessly. His cold mutton had just been brought.

"Eh, an Indian legend? What?"

"You never heard it before, general? Why, you surprise me! Among a certain hill tribe in India—I forget the name, now—the turquoise is always used as a love stone. The blue ones, those that have kept their color, are considered sacred; they are handed

down from father to son, and from mother to daughter. But the green ones, like certain scarabs in Egypt—they are cursed. They are blood stones!"

"That's strange!" said the general. "You interest me, sir; you interest me exceedingly! Blood stones—but why?"

"Because the one who is forsaken, whether the man or the woman, they revenge themselves. They're obliged to, you see. It's one of their social laws, no worse, after all, than some of our own. And when the stain is wiped out, the stone resumes its natural color."

"By George! Is that true, sir? I've lived half my life in India, and I never heard that!"

"No? You didn't?" said Barry.

"One of the hill tribes, you say? My word, then—why, that would explain! This is most amazing! Which tribe is it?"

Barry stretched out his hand impulsively, and laid it on the general's.

"The name of that tribe? Wait a minute—wait a minute! Jove, it's escaped me! Here's your ring, general."

The older man nodded and stared at Barry. He seemed to be excited.

"That's a strange coincidence, a most remarkable coincidence that you should have told me that, sir, just now. Why, it's years ago that the thing happened. Gwen and I were young officers, lieutenants, together in the Indian service when he told me the story; and since then, 'pon my word—the entire matter had passed from my memory, until just the other day, when I heard he was shot."

"Gwen! 'Major Gwen?" exclaimed Barry.

"Yes. Did you know him?"

"Oh, slightly—the barest acquaintance. Strange such a man should commit suicide. What possessed him to do it? It isn't often that a man of his caliber——"

"Suicide!" cried the general. "Gwen? Never! Where under heaven did you get that idea?"

"From the papers," said Barry. "The accounts all agreed. He was found in

his summerhouse, where he worked in the mornings—his revolver beside him. He was unconscious then, but later he rallied, and when the surgeon arrived he——"

"Yes—yes?" said the general.

"He confessed that he had done it in a moment of depression."

"The papers said that, did they?"

"Yes."

"Well, they lied."

"I'm sorry, sir, but the attorneys, Pennant & Co., Major Gwen's lawyers—I know them very well, and they told me the same. There was never any question."

"The attorneys lied!" As the general said this, his face flushed purple, and he brought his fist down with a bang on the table. "I tell you, young man, I know what I'm saying—Major Gwen was no suicide."

Barry hesitated a moment. I nudged him with my foot under the table, and the general turned suddenly, as if the subject was closed. But before he could take up his knife and fork, Barry broke in again persistently, irrepressibly. He was too good a lawyer to leave an argument high and dry like that, with the proof in his hand. It was against nature.

"General Chatterton!"

"Well?"

"You're mistaken, sir. I'm sorry to have to tell you, but I was down in Fleet Street yesterday, in Pennant's office, and they showed me the paper signed by the major."

"His own writing?"

"Yes. The few words in pencil where he makes his statement."

"That he shot himself? What?" The general turned fiercely.

Barry nodded his head.

"Then, Mr. Whittemore, Gwen himself lied!"

The voice with which the general roared this was evidently the one he had used on the battlefield. The men looked up, all over the room, and we all started back.

"He did it to shield her! The papers don't know, the attorneys don't know. Nobody knows. But the moment I

heard the news I suspected, and now I'm sure to a dead certainty. He lied, I tell you, and he did it to shield her!"

"Who?" cried Barry.

"The woman, the woman who gave him the— Gentlemen, my friend is on his deathbed. He can never recover. He cannot speak for himself, nor would he if he could. Any moment now the telegram may reach me. When I left him, he was dying. To save his honor, to remove this terrible imputation, that in his great-heartedness he has taken on himself, I will tell you the story. It is true as gospel, so far as I know it—the inference is uncertain, but to me unmistakable. I will leave you to judge."

Chatterton lowered his voice, leaned forward; we both did the same. Jean moved about noiselessly, changing the plates. The young aid stopped eating, and began to take notice. Barry settled himself comfortably on his elbow to listen. He had the expression of the fisherman, who, having once hooked his salmon, is willing to play out all the line that it needs. His eyes met mine, and I thought he winked slightly.

"Yes, sir," said the general, "here you are, both men of the world, men of experience, I take it, and I'd make a high wager, you never heard anything like this before. The tale is so strange it's beyond belief. What I know, I'll tell you—and then, for the rest, I'd like your opinion."

"It began way back in the early seventies. Gwen and I were in the service together, and there wasn't a finer young officer in the army. He was a bit gay, just in the beginning, dividing his spare time between polo and dancing; but after the first year he was sent off to one of the remote hill stations, and for six months or more nobody saw him. When he came back he was utterly changed. Nobody thought much about it. The climate in India affects some temperaments. He did his work well, and he kept to himself."

"One night—it was the first queer thing I noticed—we were smoking together in my quarters. It was hot as hell, and he sat there shivering."

"Hey—Gwen! Hello!"

"What's the matter?" he said.

"You must be in love!"

"There had been some rumor floating about that he was engaged to a girl in England who was on her way out. It was the wife of the colonel who started the rumor; it seemed she knew the aunt of the girl."

"Find out, Mr. Chatterton," she said, 'can't you? He's as close as an oyster. Men are so inexplicable. Now, the idea of you, his chum, not knowing!'

"Well, I did it to please her. But when I tossed that remark over to Gwen I did it offhand, so that he could dodge it or not, as he pleased. To my surprise, he sat there in his seat as if petrified. The look on his face was so strange that I was startled, and all of a sudden he gave a queer laugh, a laugh that chilled my bones."

"My word, old man! What's the matter?"

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing! Look here, Chatterton." He spoke very low. "Suppose you were engaged to a girl, a nice English girl, who had waited for you for years and written to you faithfully—and you knew, you couldn't help knowing, she loved you. Suppose the date of the marriage was settled, it was all arranged—and she was coming to join you. What would you do?"

"You mean if—"

"Yes."

"Great Scott!" I said.

"Do you think a fellow would be a cad?"

"Heavens, that depends! If he were sure of himself, and it wasn't too late! I'd hate to do it, Gwen, I swear, but if it were I, I'd break the engagement. It's better, after all, for the girl in the end. Can't you let her down gently?"

"But suppose"—Gwen's face went as white as plaster—"suppose she'd started, sailed already—she was coming out to join you!" He flung away his cigarette and sprang to his feet. "And suppose, Chatterton—God! Suppose, if you can, that you loved some one else!" He paced the room fiercely. "Some one you couldn't marry, you dared not marry—you were too great

a coward to dream of marrying! Suppose yourself in the devil of a fix like that! What would you do, Chatterton? What in all God's earth would you do?"

"He came over and clutched me by the shoulders, staring with a haggard gaze straight into my eyes.

"By Jove, I don't know, Gwen! That's a terrible business!"

"Think, Chatterton! I have racked my brains until my head is bursting! Speak! Say something!"

"It isn't that fool of a Danby's wife, is it?"

"No! No!"

"Not the——"

"No, I tell you—nobody here! Nobody you know, or ever will know, or ever can know!"

"His eyes met mine. For a moment there was dead silence between us.

"It was then, all of a sudden, that I noticed his hand. He was wearing this ring, this same ring, gentlemen. I want you to mark it—and the turquoise was blue. It was blue then—believe it or not, as you please. It was blue as the sea.

"The deuce! I exclaimed. 'Where did you get that, Gwen? What a beautiful turquoise!'

"You know how one changes the subject instinctively sometimes, in a moment of embarrassment? I did it to save him, to cover his emotion; but the very next moment I saw my mistake. He had grown still whiter, and had thrust both hands down deep in his pockets.

"Don't, Chatterton—don't!" he said. 'It's a raw wound still. You can't imagine what I'm going through, man! My dance is over now, and I've got to pay the piper. I'll do it, I'll do it, but I'd rather face hell!' He said it through his teeth. 'This is all I have left! Six months of happiness gone like a dream! This is all I have left!'

"He stamped up and down the room for a long while, raving. I tried my best to quiet him, to bring him to his senses, but he flung me off, and stamped on. It was a horrible sight. The fellow seemed to have gone stark mad

with his remorse and his memories. I never think of it now without a shudder. But at last he went off, about two in the morning—and the next day, when I met him on duty, he had himself in hand again. Except for his pallor and a certain curious, blighted look, he seemed about as usual.

"Well, about a week later the fiancée arrived. She was a tall, angular, ordinary-enough-looking English girl. There are thousands of them—blond-haired, red-cheeked, turned out of the same mold—good as gold and dull as ditch water. Gwen took his hurdles nobly. They were married almost directly right there in the station, with the full pomp and ceremony of a military wedding. The colonel's wife arranged it.

"Poor dear young things!" she said. 'Not a relation between the two of them! Put on all your regimental frills, and order the band. We don't have a marriage every day, and we'll give them a time that they'll always remember!'

"They did, too; but it wasn't the colonel's wife's fault."

The general stopped suddenly, and gave an odd laugh.

"That wedding, gentlemen—the facts were all suppressed, of course; and it never leaked out into the English papers at all. But the scandal there in India, in military circles—it was something appalling, and it all but cost Gwen his career. This is what happened:

"At the door of the chapel, as Gwen led his bride out, suddenly a woman leaped from the crowd. It was all confused, and over in a second, but I saw, we all saw, the dagger in her hand. Before any one could stop her, she had flung herself on Gwen. It was I who dragged her off. I've handled many a man in my life, and I've broken many a hard-mouthed horse, but, Jove, it took every ounce of muscle in me to grapple with that Indian girl! She was like a young panther—lithe, sinewy, panting with passion—as beautiful a creature as you ever laid eyes on.

"She let out a torrent of jargon on me—stuff I couldn't make out, except a word here and there. Gwen had reeled

back. There was a patch of blood on his collar, and every one was screaming. Both he and his bride were surrounded directly—and then the thing was over. But one impression of that scene I shall never forget. The moment that he saw her; and the look on her face when she thought she had stabbed him—fury, love, triumph, passion, despair! As we dragged her away, she hurled a sentence at him. I couldn't make it out then, but now I understand. She was pointing to his hand. Even as she struggled, fighting and raging like a trapped creature, she was pointing to his hand.

"*Wah! Wah! Yama! Jo boga, so hoga!*" (God of death! What shall be, shall be!)

"That was a long while ago, gentlemen. Gwen was sent straight off to another part of India. The thing was hushed up; the Indian disappeared. It was years afterward before we met again, and then we'd both retired. He had a neat little place up in Surrey, and mine was adjoining. The friendship was renewed. Then, the other day—Mr. Whittemore has told you—Major Gwen was found shot."

The general took up his wineglass, and looked across the table.

"That's all very well," said Barry slowly. "It's an interesting story. But for myself I must say I don't follow your deductions."

"Nor I!" I exclaimed.

We both shook our heads.

"How many years was it, general?" said Barry.

"Twenty, or thereabouts. Wait a moment, if you please. The day before the shooting I was with him. We were in that same summerhouse, when the gardener came out and brought him a letter.

"Another begging missive, I suppose," said Gwen.

"The writing was curious, and the postmark London. He opened it carelessly. All of a sudden I heard him give a cry. When I looked up, there he sat in his desk chair, with his head in his hands, staring down at the paper.

"My God!" he said, and his voice

was all gone, as if his breath had failed in his throat suddenly.

"As I sprang to my feet—the open sheet lay on the table before me—and I couldn't help seeing. The writing was Hindustani. He covered it up quickly.

"It's nothing, Chatterton," he said; 'don't be alarmed. I had a shock, just for a moment. It's nothing—a trifle. What were you saying?'

"He looked very strange, I thought, but his face was hard to read. Whenever he chose, he could make it like a mask. And, of course, I asked no questions. We continued our discussion, and then I went home. The next thing I heard, he was shot, and dying. They telephoned the news, and I rushed straight over."

"That was——"

"Wednesday evening, Mr. Whittemore."

"You saw him?"

"Yes."

"You spoke with him?"

"I did."

"Then," cried Barry, "you mean the major accused the——"

"No, no! He was dying, I tell you! They thought he couldn't live the night; but he was conscious—as conscious and in his senses, sir, as any man here. And this is what he said. His voice was so weak I had to bend over him, but I heard distinctly:—

"Chatterton—you remember the turquoise? Take it—keep it! And when she seeks you, tell her—he gasped at every word—it's all right, I understand! The stain is gone now! The stain is gone—now!"

"Then he pointed to his finger.

"I took the ring, obeying the look in his eyes and his gesture; and almost immediately he relapsed into unconsciousness. It was coma, the surgeon said, and he would lie like that until the end. There was no hope of his reviving, so as important business called me into town I came away. The telegram may summon me back at any moment. That is all, gentlemen. Now, what is your opinion?"

Barry crumbled his roll reflectively.

"It's possible, of course," he said. "Stranger things have happened. But how do you figure out that the woman got to England? And why should she wait twenty years for her revenge?"

The general passed his hand over his forehead.

"Don't you see?" he cried. "You've hit the nail on the head exactly. The two things go together. She waited because she couldn't get here before. Now, this year, for the first time——"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Barry. "I believe you're right! I forgot the exposition. They brought an Indian village over. That would be her chance, of course. Jove! You made inquiries, did you?"

"At once."

"Well?"

"A woman from that Indian village had vanished."

We both started, and Barry leaned eagerly forward.

"The same day?"

"Yes. The body of an Indian was found in the Thames."

"An Indian woman?"

"An Indian woman."

We were silent for a moment. All of a sudden Barry gave an exclamation:

"Look, gentlemen—look! I swear!" He was staring down at the turquoise. "It has changed color!"

We all gazed in astonishment. What he said was true.

At that moment the waiter came in with a salver which he carried to the general.

"A telegram, monsieur!"

"A telegram!" cried the general.

We looked at one another.

As the general's hand reached out for the message it trembled a little, and the light from the candles flashed on his ring.

The turquoise was blue. It was blue as the sea.

THREE KISSES

HER lips met his as they said "Good-by"—

This sweetheart of his youth—

As with a tear in each deep-blue eye

She gave him the kiss of truth.

Her rosebud mouth was as pure as dew.

Like an angel's blessing fell

This sacred kiss—and she never knew

That it meant a last farewell.

Then he was kissed by a courtesan

Who loved for the greed of gold.

Her lips were the property of man,

Her heart could be bought and sold.

The blood-red rose that she gave to him

O'er his throat its petals spilled.

Her perfumed breath made his senses swim,

She gave him the kiss that killed.

And when the kiss of truth was dead,

And the blood-red kiss was cold,

A snow-haired woman bent her head—

A woman, withered, old.

She stroked his hands with a mother's love,

Her tears fell, and they laved

Away his sins. And the God above

Knew hers was the kiss that saved.

JOSEPH P. GALTON.



SOMETHING like three hundred plays and musical comedies have been announced for production during the fall and winter season in New York. This seems to mean that for a large portion of the time each of the several recognized critics on the daily newspapers and the enthusiastic first nighters who make it a rule never to miss a premier will have to divide himself or herself into several portions in order to attend them all. But things are seldom what they seem in this wonderful world of make-believe, where the habit of pretending gets to be so strong that even its victims come to believe in the fabrications.

Last year the announcements of new plays were little less comprehensive than those of the present fall. Then, too, it looked as if there would not be a single night during the ensuing season when two or three new plays would not be bidding for the public's favors. But lo—when the end of the season hove in sight—the complete list of new works that had seen the light numbered exactly a hundred and four, comprising comedy, drama, and musical mélange.

When the tables are consulted showing that of these many plays just twenty-three were great successes, it will be gathered that they represent some capital lost as well.

And now a new season has begun—begun in the same old way with a little

scattered firing of small guns, and the story of wholesale supplies of ammunition rolling to the front for almost immediate use in the warfare to be waged along the Great White Way. Again, as always, the lists are padded to make a show; again, as heretofore, a comparison of the season's promises now with what has been accomplished at the end will indicate that all that glitters is not gold.

But there will be quantity enough. Of that there is no doubt. As for quality—no man can say.

The lists, as I have said, are long and subject to amendment. Of a few of the plays produced for spring trials on the road, or about to be imported from abroad, it is possible to give more than the bare details. Of the others, only time can tell what they are all about. The Republic, for instance, is opening its season with "The Woman," a play by William C. DeMille, which had a preliminary production in Washington last April. At that time, Miss Helen Ware was in the cast, acting a rôle now given to Mary Nash. The production is by Belasco.

The scene of "The Woman" is a hotel in Washington, D. C. The hotel is the favorite residence for the families of big political figures in transit, as well as the rendezvous for party leaders in times of great political convulsions. It is an occasion of this sort, in fact, that precipitates the action of Mr. DeMille's drama, the first act of

which discloses the "Amen Corner" with its group of party leaders. These are, on one hand, the *Honorable Jim Blake*, head of "The Machine," so called, and his henchmen, the *Honorable Silas Gregg*, representative from Massachusetts; the *Honorable Tim Neligan*, of Pennsylvania; the *Honorable Mark Robertson*, of New York, all utterly corrupt and unscrupulous politicians. On the other hand is *Matthew Standish*, leader of the insurgents, a man of principles who is bent upon redeeming the country from the thrall of "The Machine." *Standish* has fought tooth and nail to defeat the notorious Mullins Bill, and victory is in sight for the insurgents unless "The Machine" can discover something in *Standish's* apparently impeccable past. At the last moment an old scandal is unearthed, and from this point the drama leads to a scene of inquisition in which *Wanda Kelly*, a stenographer, and *Mrs. Roberts*, the heroine, are put upon the rack.

The dénouement is a happy one.

Mr. Belasco is also at work on a play for Frances Starr, who has finally abandoned "The Easiest Way" after two long tours in which conventional prejudices were encountered at various points—the kind of prejudice which usually develops when a question of morals is treated seriously on the stage.

It is to be recorded that Mr. Belasco's other important offering this season will be "The Return of Peter Grimm," serving as the newest vehicle for Mr. David Warfield. The piece was produced in Chicago last year, where it appears to have made a strong impression.

"The Return of Peter Grimm" tells the story of a warm-hearted, practical, obstinate old bachelor of Dutch lineage, whose business of scientific floriculture has endured and grown through seven generations. His heir is a nephew, *Frederik*. In his household is also a beautiful young girl, *Kathrien*, whom he had adopted as a child. Wishing to perpetuate the family name and business, he insists on a marriage between these two young people, regardless of the fact that *Kathrien* is in love with

another man. *Grimm* has been warned by his best friend, a rough and sturdy old Scotch physician, of a heart weakness which may prove fatal. His death ends the first act.

Having passed into the other world, thus rising to a knowledge and understanding denied to him in earthly life, he sees that his insistence on a marriage between his beloved little *Kathrien* and the rascally nephew was his greatest error. He cannot rest until he corrects the mistake, making *Kathrien* renounce the promise she has given him, and marry the man of her own choice. So *Peter Grimm* reappears on the scene in the second act, this time as a spirit, and proceeds about his mission. To convey his message, *Peter Grimm* must speak through another, and the "sensitive" medium is found in a little boy who is himself near death. The methods and incidents through which *Peter Grimm* succeeds form the story of the play. For the present it is enough to know that his earthly mistakes are corrected, and that, even though he has passed from this life, he is still able to bestow happiness on those he loves.

From the letter of Mr. Charles Frohman's announcements, it would appear that he is again turning his eyes toward the home fields. But his interests abroad have been so large that he has seldom been able to keep his gaze in the near-by pastures long enough to discover the tender green of slowly ripening native talent. His most promising material this season again appears to be the work of English authors. Possibly the most likely of the lot is a play by Haddon Chambers, which has had a long run at Wyndham's in London, where it is played by one of the most perfectly selected casts that I have seen in years. It is called "Passers By," a title which does not explain itself until you have seen the play or know its story.

"Passers By" tells of *Peter Waverton*, a young Englishman of means and social position, who is about to be married to a sweet young girl. He is restless and discontented with a life nar-

rowed by natural selfishness and environment. *Waverton* arrives in his rooms unexpectedly one night, and finds his man *Pine* entertaining a cabman who has been glad to avail himself of the butler's hospitality, for the fog in the streets has made things outdoors most uncomfortable. *Waverton* promptly discharges the valet, then asks him what extenuation he can urge for having made use of his master's rooms for purposes of hospitality and entertainment. The valet says his own room looks out on a blank wall, while *Mr. Waverton's* windows command a view of the street. He adds that the passers-by interest him, as he is fond of studying human nature. *Waverton* walks to the window, looks down into the darkening street, through which presumably the shady riffraff of the London night is passing, and asks what the butler can find of interest in such a crew.

Whereupon *Pine*, taking his clew from a previous utterance of *Nighty's*—the cabman being a bit of a philosopher and kindly socialist in one—says that they are "all human when you get the mask off." And now, *Waverton*, being once more in a pleasant mood, points to the street, and asks *Pine* what he makes of a certain miserable, shiftless-looking creature there. *Pine* replies that there is nothing to him, that he belongs to the unregenerate. Whereupon *Waverton* decides to have him up, and, in spite of the valet's protestation, insists upon extending the hospitality of his apartments to the miserable little creature who now enters. He is one of those derelicts in human form who haunt the Victoria Embankment at night, and who eke out existence as they can without exertion on their own part. His name, as nearly as he can remember, is *Samuel Burns*, but he has long since lost his identity in the general nomenclature of "man." "Sometimes folks," he says, "calls to me: 'Here, man.'" *Burns*, having been properly fed, accepts the gift of an overcoat from *Waverton*, and is told that if things go wrong he may call again.

Shortly after, *Pine*, returning from

the street door, says that a young person on the stoop appears to be suffering greatly from a cough, the fog having got into her lungs and made breathing difficult. *Waverton*, learning that the young person is a woman, goes down to fetch her. He discovers her to be the woman he loved years before. *Margaret*, it appears, was a governess in the wholly respectable and equally prosaic home of the *Wavertons*; the young pair had been attracted to each other, they had loved, and, during *Waverton's* absence, their secret had been discovered by his step-sister, an unpleasantly officious person, who had bundled the girl into the streets, and held back letters addressed by her to *Waverton*. She has supported herself in the meantime by sewing.

Waverton learns that there is a child—their child. He is naturally overcome with the revelation, but the subsequent discovery by her of the photograph of a sweet-faced girl on his reading table leads him to a frank avowal of his engagement.

Three acts pass before the relationships are again properly adjusted, before a scene of great force, in which the step-sister discovers the presence of *Margaret* and her child in *Waverton's* apartment, assumes the worst, and orders the young girl, his fiancée, to go below and wait for her in the carriage. The girl has absolute faith in *Waverton's* honesty; she now fears, as she says, that her days of waiting in the carriage are over, and she stands firm in her determination to do what she can for *Margaret*, who is sorely in need of sympathy. For the boy has been stolen away by *Burns*, who had subsequently returned for shelter after an accident in the fog-covered streets, and who, having been made a part of the domestic force, has resented the contemptuous attitude of the punctilious valet, *Pine*.

The act which embraces these disclosures is very powerful. And though it is now obvious that before long *Margaret* and *Waverton* must take up their lives again together, the means to the end are properly concealed.

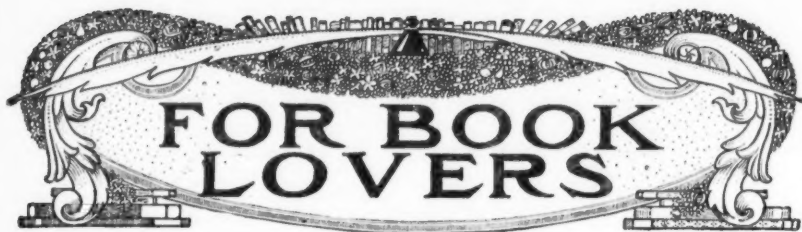
A play by Sir Arthur Wing Pinero is always something of an event. This season we are to have one in his lighter vein. "Preserving Mr. Panmure" has been done in London, but its story must still be tolerably unfamiliar to our own theatergoers. The thing from which *Mr. Panmure* has to be preserved is a kiss—in itself a very innocent thing sometimes, but quite as often a means to an end of interesting complications. The fun in the play comes from the efforts to find out who kissed the governess—*Josephine*, by name—a fresh, young country lass serving in the *Panmure* household. As a matter of fact, it was *Mr. Panmure* himself who had kissed *Josephine*. He had done so half in an outburst of gratitude to her for having suggested the heads of a discourse upon St. Polycarp out of the Apostolic Encyclopedia. All the other gentlemen in the house are suspected—especially by their wives. Even a pompous privy councillor, who is an honored guest in the house, where he is staying in the course of a political campaign, and into whose sanctum *Josephine* fled for refuge, is dragged into the affair. *Mr. Panmure* himself has to conduct the inquiry, which, confident in *Josephine's* promise not to tell, he does with an assumption of grave arrogance. Finally, so strained do relations become, that out of chivalry the privy councillor's private secretary confesses to a deed he never essayed—much as he would have liked to do so. Through it all, *Panmure* remains "preserved."

Josephine contents herself with just one little piece of deadly revenge. She appropriates *Panmure's* sermon. And at the end *Mr. Panmure*, fortified with a flaskful of whisky, totters out to preach his sermon, with treble guilt upon his soul and not an idea about St. Polycarp in his silly, old head.

One of the quaintest entertainments promised is on the Shuberts' list, and involves a Scotch comedy, by Graham Moffat, a Scotch author, played by a

Scotch company of actors, whose members include the playwright himself, his daughter, and several other close relations. This play, which bears the curious title, "*Buntzie Pulls the Strings*," could not have been regarded as "sure-fire" even by the London selectors of plays, for it was first given a trial at a single matinée performance. No play seen in London in a long time has had more unanimous praise. As a result, it was immediately put on for a run, and has prospered. An American production is promised later in the season with the original Scotch cast.

"*Buntzie Pulls the Strings*" has for its fulcrum the borrowing of a sum of money from a trust fund. The stern Scotch father, who completely dominates his grown-up children, has a "past," which comes to confound him at the zenith of his self-righteousness. This past consists of an elderly creature, whom he deserted while she was waiting for him at the altar rails of a Glasgow church. He ran away, married a woman with the bawbees, became the father of children, the owner of a prosperous provision shop in Lintichau, and an elder, and he was not discovered till years after, when both were in ripe middle age. But *Felen Dunlop* accidentally dropped upon him when *Tammas Biggar* was being hooked by a designing spinster into matrimony for the second time. He had borrowed the money he held in trust for *Miss Susie Simpson*, and she, knowing it, proposed to him, and threatened him with exposure if he proved unwilling. It is *Buntzie*, *Tammas'* daughter, who is the pivot of the piece. She is sensible, artful, honest, and a splendid manager. She is the power behind the family throne. And when the trouble is over and *Tammas* wishes to renew his vows to *Miss Dunlop*, it is *Buntzie* who puts her through her paces, and with sublime ingenuousness discovers that she can cook, and wash, and is economical.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

WILLIAM J. LOCKE'S special art seems to lie in his portrayal of freak characters. He begins by setting forth with infinite care all their eccentricities and then humanizing them by making them seem real and lovable.

In "The Glory of Clementina," published by the John Lane Company, two such people appear, and to readers trained to association with conventional types the results are startling.

Clementina Wing and Doctor Quixtus are anything but commonplace. She is a great portrait painter, a woman no longer young, with coarse black hair, perpetually straggling in uncared-for strands, a dark, oily complexion, her face disfigured with smudges of paint, and always untidily clothed in some old skirt and blouse. He is a high-bred, gentle, fastidious scholar. A love affair between the two is in itself enough to arrest and hold attention, but there is besides no end to the situations and complications.

Doctor Quixtus suffers so many afflictions, all at once, that his childlike faith is destroyed, and he decides to embark upon a career of cold, calculated crime, aided and abetted by three social jackals, Huckaby, Vandermeer, and Billiter. Horse racing gives him his first experience in vice, but he finds it unspeakably dull and dreary, so he decides, under the advice of his mentor, to break a woman's heart. Mrs. Lena Pontaim is selected as the victim, and she gracefully prepares to have her heart broken and make Quixtus pay for the damage. She is an admirable contrast to Clementina, cultivated, charming, and thoroughly feminine.

The latter, however, discovers the plot, and emerges from the paint-daubed fishwife of the studio, into the brilliant, dominating celebrity, who wears diamonds and hundred-guinea gowns. She succeeds in her mission of saving the good doctor, and marries him herself.

The story is written in Locke's most brilliant vein, and all the minor threads of the story are followed with a vivacity that is unfailing.



Mr. Jefferey Farnol is a born romanticist, and his work in "The Broad Highway," published by Little, Brown & Co., shows with what good effect he has worshiped at the shrine of Blackmore and Stevenson. His literary construction is unusually, perhaps intentionally, broken and fragmentary, but his narrative has a movement and vigor that carry it.

He has chosen an historical period, that of George IV., for the setting of his tale, an era which helps to render plausible most of the incidents of the book.

Peter Vibart, the hero, who is not only a gentleman and a scholar, but an athletic youth as well, is, at the opening, cut off by his uncle with a meager ten guineas unless he consents to marry the Lady Sophia Sefton. But the lady's reputation does not please him; she is the reigning toast of the town, a dark-browed, splendid beauty, who is said to have galloped her horse up the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral. So instead of seeking to win her heart, Peter starts off on a walking tour through Kent and Surrey.

He has a cousin, Sir Maurice Vibart,

a thoroughly bad egg, to whom the same proposition has been made respecting Lady Sophia.

Many adventures, including encounters with bravos and footpads, befall him, and he finally seeks a home in a deserted cottage in the woods, and becomes a blacksmith. There he gives refuge to a lady in distress, and, as "Charmian," shelters and protects her from an ardent pursuer, who turns out to be Sir Maurice.

The outcome we leave to the imagination of the reader.

We all dream occasionally of an escape, from monotonous routine, into the woods, and this may account, in a measure, for the popularity of this book.



"Dawn O'Hara," by Edna Ferber, published by F. A. Stokes Company, is a depressing tale of a young woman who comes to New York to carve out a brilliant journalistic career for herself, and who unfortunately marries the star reporter of the paper to which she attaches herself.

So the title of the book is misleading. One expects a rollicking Irish story, full of humorous situations, and with a witty, adorable heroine, as fascinating as her name.

The two principal male characters are painfully conventional types, the reporter who does the familiar newspaper stunts and secures the usual miraculous "scoops," and the nerve specialist, Von Gerhard, the customary famous, wise German expert.

The reporter's career is brief; his weakness for the bottle takes him to the insane asylum by a short cut, and Dawn collapses with nervous prostration.

The greater part of the book is taken up with a description of all the symptoms of a nervous breakdown, and the treatment prescribed by the learned Von Gerhard. She recovers, but with her habit of indulging in weak, ill-timed flippancies unbroken.

Her husband is conveniently killed, and Dawn, of course, marries the doctor.

"Honesty's Garden," by Paul Creswicke, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, is not recommended to those who prefer a galloping story of adventure or to the others who like their fiction highly spiced.

To the few, however, who care more for the telling than for the tale, the book will bring full measure of genuine satisfaction. It makes no pretensions as to plot, and there is really no reason why it should, for in this type of novel plot is something like a vulgar intrusion.

The author merely tells with considerable charm the story of an old-young man, a writer who is also a collector of old books and rare china, and who is fortunate enough to dwell next door to an attractive girl with a beautiful garden. Honesty is her name. How she vanishes one day from her garden, and how her neighbor seeks her, at last to find her and return with her in triumph, is the theme of this cultivated, leisurely, and pleasant little book.



Augustus Thomas' latest play, "As a Man Thinks," one of the box-office successes of last season, and certainly the artistic success, has been brought out in book form by Duffield & Co.

Most people are agreed that play reading is a vain and tiresome pursuit. The reader sits down to an unadorned feast of dialogue, and must make heavy drafts upon his imagination to furnish the environment of the characters, as well as their personal appearance. But this play is an exception to the rule. The power and vitality of the story itself will hold attention, involving no mental effort to construct a background, but instead creating its own atmosphere.

As a master of technique, Mr. Thomas stands alone among American playwrights, and this new play is the finest expression of his matured art. The theme is not a new one; it is based on a discussion of the old question, whether an equal moral standard for men and for women is a possibility, and

whether, according to all the laws of nature, the seventh commandment was not written especially for women, no matter how she may personally regard the matter. No theme is absolutely new, but the treatment may be and is in this case. The reaction of the characters, with their diverse personal interests, upon each other's lives, the inevitable unfoldment of perfectly plausible situations, the whole composing a logical and convincing drama, is a masterly achievement.

The most interesting thing about Mr. Thomas is that he shows no sign of stagnation. Ideas fascinate him enormously, and he is constantly reaching out for more light on his art.



"Cynthia of the Minute," by Louis Joseph Vance, published by Dodd, Mead & Co., is a rather fantastic tale of adventure—twentieth-century adventure.

It is the story of Cynthia Grayce and Bruce Crittenden, a young woman and a young man, who, at the opening of the book, are at the end of their resources, and are both afloat in New York. At a small French restaurant, they first encounter each other, and, of course, are most naturally drawn together, partly by their mutual trouble and partly through the instrumentality of the Red Man, surnamed George O. Rhode, whose profession is the singular one of "inventor of occupations."

In their more or less hopeless condition, the Red Man finds little difficulty in interesting them in a scheme

for their employment, and almost before they know it they find themselves embarked on a steamship which is starting off on a more or less mysterious voyage. It never clearly appears why Rhode was so anxious to have a young man and a young woman aboard the boat, and so we must infer that the author found the two young people on his hands, ready, so to speak, for adventure, and so had to invent a filibustering trip to supply it.

Cynthia and Bruce had plenty of excitement. Read the book, and see what it was.



Important New Books.

"The Ne'er Do Well," Rex Beach, Harper & Bros.

"Tales of the Town," Charles Belmont Davis, Duffield & Co.

"A Woman Alone," Anonymous, D. Appleton & Co.

"Stories that End Well," Octave Thanet, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Carpet from Bagdad," Harold MacGrath, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"The Substitute Prisoner," Max Marcin, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"The Song of Renny," Maurice Hewlett, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Bianca," William De Morgan, Henry Holt & Co.

"Ethan Frome," Edith Wharton, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Drift," Marguerite Mooers Marshall, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Confessions of Artemas Quibble," Arthur Train, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"Janey," Inez Haynes Gillmore, Henry Holt & Co.

"Desmond Rourke," John Haslette, D. Appleton & Co.

"The Man Who Could Not Lose," Richard Harding Davis, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"A Prairie Courtship," Harold Bindloss, F. A. Stokes Co.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

IT is not always that a writer is popular among the people of whom he writes. Kipling, for example. Certain newspaper editors in India not only resent the pictures of Indian life he has given to the world; they accuse him of creating an India that has no existence outside of his own wonderful tales.

Several years ago an American author wrote entertainingly and evidently with intended kindness of the folks of Cape Cod. The storm that the book stirred up among the people whom it aimed to portray was as great as any that ever blew in from sea.

But this is not always the case. Once in a great while some author comes along who has the very rare gift of being able to write from the *inside* of his subject *out*, rather than from the outside in. Such a man pictures a locality with insight, sympathy, and truthfulness, so that the people whom he pictures love him for his work. Every self-respecting man and woman likes to glance in the looking-glass now and then. And so long as the reflection is not distorted, it makes little difference whether the mirror is backed with mercury or the pages of a magazine. Ask any of those same Cape Cod people, who so bitterly resented the work of that other writer, what they think of Joseph C. Lincoln and his stories—Joe Lincoln they call him.

AINSLEE'S is proud of having printed

Mr. Lincoln's first stories, and of having had his name so closely identified with the magazine afterward. We have given you nothing of his since "The Woman Haters," the complete novel in the May number, which is still having such a wide success in book form. We know from your letters that you consider it high time for more. So it gives us particular pleasure to be able to announce for our December number the first of a new group of Mr. Lincoln's inimitable

Cape Cod yarns. "The Palace Parlors" is the name of it.

Christmas is the season when the members of families that are not so new that they consider the custom too old-fashioned gather for holiday reunion. The December issue will be our Christmas number, and we have arranged a little reunion for our great family. Joseph C. Lincoln will be back for it, as we have already told you. Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, whose work has been such a delight to you in the past, has promised to be on hand. John Kendrick Bangs will bring with him, as a Christmas contribution, one of his very best, "The House of the Seven Santas." Charles Neville Buck, whose charming Princess Cara stories first appeared in AINSLEE'S, will give you "The Empty Frame." And, as welcome as anything could be, we know from your many inquiries, will be the return of several of Margaretta Tuttle's "Nadine Carson" characters.



THEN there will be the members of our family who do not have to return for the holidays, those who have been with us right along. Nalbro Bartley will be represented by another of her stirring stories of the Philippines, "The Lie." I. A. R. Wylie contributes the story of the stage for December, and we think you will agree with us that it is well worthy of the author of "The Paupers of Portman Square," this month's novelette. Frank Condon's "The Saving Tears" is one of those rare little things that makes fiction seem truer than truth. "On a Business Basis," by Thomas Addison, is a big, strong story of the coming of love into the lives of a young woman of social position and the self-made man to whom she had sold herself in marriage. "The Heart of an Old Fool," by Andrew Soutar, "A Christmas Bonus," by Owen Oliver, and "The Guile of the Girls," by Elliott Flower,

are other short stories that will make this coming number a magazine to entertain.



THE complete novel for December is "In

Search of Arcady," by Nina Wilcox Putnam. It is as difficult to describe as it is easy to read. It is a truly fascinating romance laid for the greater part in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. The hero is a clean-cut young English nobleman of the sort more often found in English life than in American fiction. The heroine is a beautiful young American who at times, to the dismay of her family, suddenly finds herself unable to resist the lure of the gypsies and life in the open. There is something of the same lure in the story itself. No one should begin it who has not the time to finish it.

As we look it over we feel that for Christmas we have put together a thoroughly successful number of AINSLEE'S—a number every bit as entertaining as this present one.



THE letter contest which closed October 1

was most successful in every way, and we take this occasion to thank the many friends who have shown their interest in the magazine by taking the time and trouble to write us. We hope to be able to announce the prize award in our next issue.

It is gratifying to find that so many of you approve of those features that are distinctly characteristic of AINSLEE'S. Almost all the letters that we have thus far been able to read indorse our policy of having everything complete in each number. You evidently agree with our idea that if a story is entertaining enough to print in AINSLEE'S it is too entertaining to have to wait for from month to month.

In endeavoring to make AINSLEE'S "the magazine that entertains" we have felt that, after all, there is usually more "uplift" in

"entertainment" than there is entertainment in uplift. The following, from a Nebraska clergyman, would seem to bear us out in this:

"AINSLEE'S does not 'preach at people,' and therefore helps me forget my arduous task of forever preaching to saint and sinner who resent the 'woes' pronounced upon them. AINSLEE'S position in our home is that of an antidote for the blues; good before and after delivering a sermon. . . .

"When all seems 'vanity' to the preacher, and 'much study is a weariness to the flesh,' I turn from all other magazines and forget the vanities of the parish by reading AINSLEE'S. The characters in this magazine are so real, still of 'the earth, earthy' like the best of us, that the magazine is enhanced to all, and helps the minister not to hold too high an ideal for poor 'worms of the dust' to chin up to.

"And yet, while AINSLEE'S does not 'preach,' it paints life so real that the reader shrinks from the evil and chooses the good."

Another thing that we have found most gratifying in these letters is your appreciation of our effort to give you poetry in a magazine rather than "magazine poetry." This extract is from a New York man's letter:

". . . If I could send you a letter written by an old aunt of mine from a small Virginia town, to whom I always send my AINSLEE'S, I'm confident you would award her the prize. In thanking me for the August number she said: 'The man who wrote "The End of the Day" has seen the heart of an old woman such as I am.'

"If you will read that poem over, and imagine an old woman of seventy, who had money and a large family, children dead, money gone, it will have a new meaning to you, and you will say as I did: 'It's beautiful.'"

"When a magazine gives its readers poems and prose that mirror the human heart it's pretty sure to have 'voluntary' readers."





Living by Knowledge

A little thought will make clear the value of skillful selection of food.

High pressure days (and there are many now) tell on human body and brain.

Knowledge and facts help when ignorance would ruin.

Grape-Nuts FOOD

is made by knowledge; not by chance.

Wheat and Barley properly combined and cooked (as in Grape-Nuts) are rich in the elements required for human nourishment.

Grape-Nuts contains, in addition to the natural albumins, starches and sugars of these cereals phosphate of potash (grown in the grain) and demanded by nature in rebuilding Brain and Nerve tissue.

Grape-Nuts is fully cooked at the factory. When served with cream or rich milk, it is an appetizing food, and affords ideal nourishment for all stages of Human Life from infancy to old age.

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Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."

Just right heating

The heating question must be faced in every home. It is usually easy to tell on bitter cold days by the faces of your neighbors which of them are enduring the ills and paying the bills of old-fashioned heating, and which are in best mental poise because of having begun the preparation for the day's work in rooms genially comforted by AMERICAN Radiators and IDEAL Boilers. The family bread-winners are handicapped in the business competition with others unless they start the day in physical comfort. Then, too, an evening in a cold house is a poor place for relaxation, or mental preparation to improve one's position or earnings.



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A No. 3015 IDEAL Boiler and 175 ft. of 38-in AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$126, were used to heat this cottage. At these prices the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include the cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which are extra and vary according to climatic and other conditions.

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All raw materials used in the manufacture of IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators are subject to severe inspection in our Testing Laboratories. This testing, together with our own specially built, exclusive, automatic machinery, and running our factories regularly throughout the year, enable us to produce the uniform, highest standard of product which has made our heating outfits so world-famous. This sole effort to make the best has naturally brought great volume of business and enables us to put the price within reach of all. Most important—do not overlook the fact that IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators are fully guaranteed.

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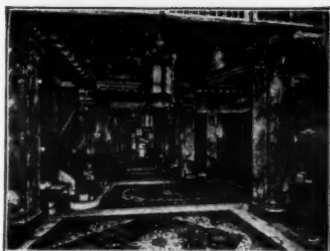
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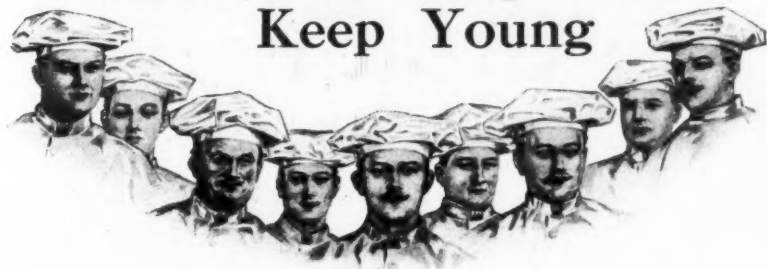


THE TWO ENTRANCES



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Let Them Help You Keep Young



Listen, Madam:

You could, if you wished, spin flax and weave cloth—knit the men's socks—do your sewing by hand, just as our grandmothers did. And you can, as they did, bake beans.

But don't you think women's time is now better employed? And don't you know that modern women keep younger?

Our part in the change lies in baking good beans. Our chefs are now baking for a million homes.

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They use Michigan beans—just the whitest and plumpest, picked out by hand. They make their sauce from whole, vine-ripened tomatoes. It costs five times what common sauce would cost.

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They have steam-heated ovens always kept at 245 degrees. Thus they give to each bean more than twice the heat that gets to most of the home-baked beans. As a result, Van Camp's digest. They don't tax the stomach, don't ferment and form gas, don't go to waste like home-baked beans.

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SAUCE
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[188]

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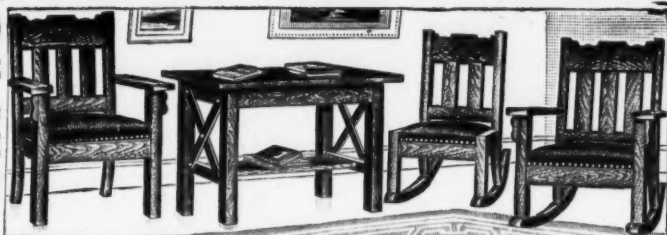
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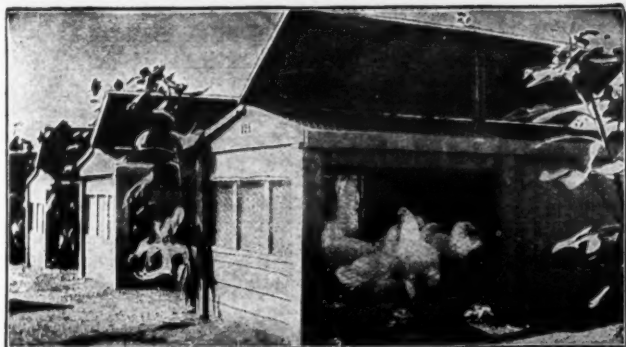
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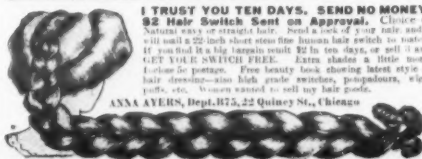
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United States Supreme Court Favors
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By a decision of the United States Supreme Court the Carthusian monks, who make the celebrated liqueur known as Chartreuse, have won their fight against the Cusenier Company, a New York corporation, to prevent the latter from using the trade-mark and other indicia of the monks' product in the sale of a similar cordial in this country. The Cusenier Company acts as agent for the French liquidator, Mons. Henri Lecontier, appointed by the French court to take possession of the property of the monks in France under the Associations act of 1901.

Following the forcible removal from their monastery, near Voiron, in the Department of Isere, in France, the monks took their liqueur manufacturing secret with them and set up a factory in Tarragona, in Spain, and there have continued to manufacture the cordial, importing from France such herbs as were needed for the purpose.

The French liquidator, it is alleged, undertook to make a cordial identical with or closely resembling the monks' product.

In about all substantial details the claims of the monks have been upheld, except that the defendant company has not been held in contempt. Justice Hughes wrote the decision. The jurisdiction of the Circuit Court was upheld. It was also set forth that the monks' non-use of the trade-mark did not constitute abandonment and that the French law affecting it could not have any extra-territorial effect as far as this country was concerned, and that the monks have an exclusive right to the use of the word Chartreuse in the sale of their product in the United States.—*New York Herald*, June 20, 1911.

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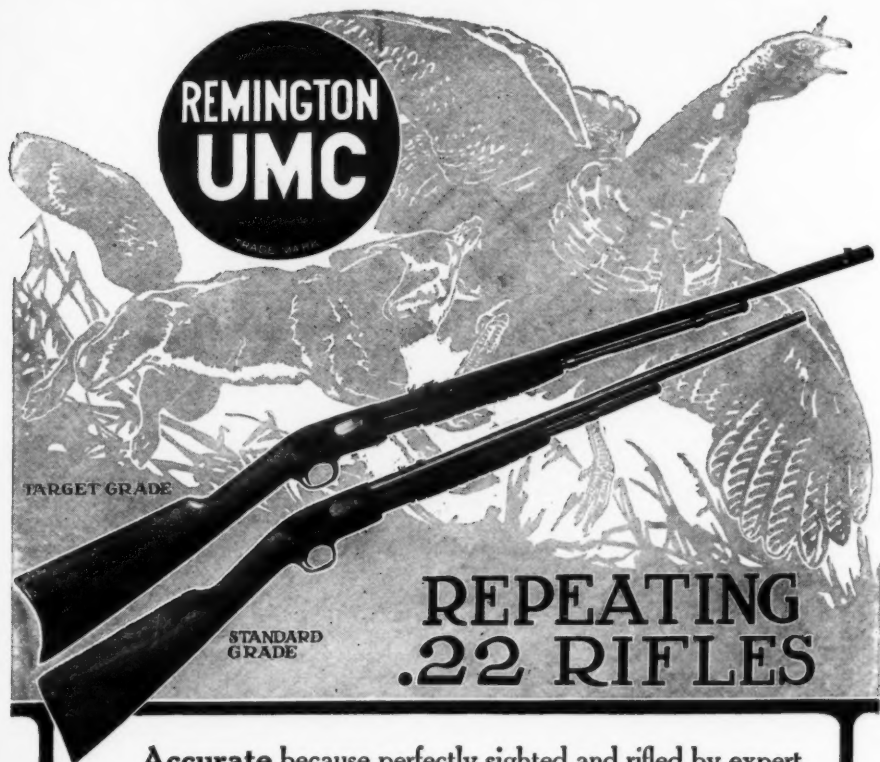
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